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THE CHILD OF THE DESERT

VOL. III.

THE
CHILD OF THE DESERT

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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THE CHILD OF THE DESERT.

CHAPTER I.

AT ORAN.

So severe continued Henry Wilton's illness at Oran that it became too evident he would not be fit to move for some time. Accordingly the yachting party took up their quarters in the town until the *Atlanta* had got in her new mast, and was able to come round for them from Cherchel.

Here Olinda anxiously awaited the promised arrival of the Marquis de St. Bertrand, for latterly she had become so accustomed to his winning manners and intellectual converse that his absence caused a hiatus in her life—a void which nought could fill. It was wrong, she knew, after his ardent professions of love, to allow this intimacy to continue, when she had no intention of marriage. But he was so fascinating, he so justly appreciated her merits at

their true worth ; he paid such respectful deferential homage to her talents and accomplishments, without a grain of flattery or deceitful guile ; and, above all, he so improved her mind by his copious fund of universal information, that she shrank from breaking the tie and driving him from her. Nor did she see—vain unreasoning woman that she was—why he should be driven from her. Why could not he and she continue to meet in a brotherly and sisterly spirit, and give themselves up to the delights of innocent Platonic affection? Raoul's thoughts were so pure, so wrapped up was he in æsthetic and exalted pursuits, and in the contemplation of what was *spirituel* and ethereal, that she believed he would by degrees learn to bring into subjection the foolish amorous spirit which possessed him, and to associate with her on the blissful footing of virtuous and disinterested friendship !

Miserable, misguided infatuation ! Could she have looked into the black recesses of that foul perjured heart, and learned its diabolical machinations against her honour and happiness, what a blighting chill of horror and disgust would have frozen the trembling soul of the unhappy girl !

After one of the drenching deluges that are wont at times to burst from the skies of Africa, when,—

“The rain gushes down in such sheets, it would stagger a
Bard for a simile short of Niagara,”

and from whose fury the travellers took shelter in an Arab *gourbi*, St. Bertrand and his companion arrived at their destination, where they soon discovered the abode of their doomed victim.

Here Raoul, so soon as he had sent on Pécoul to prepare the way, ingratiated himself afresh in the favour and affection of Olinda, whose delight was great at beholding him once more, after having so long looked in vain and sighed for his advent. Daily they passed their whole time in each other's company, without hindrance or remonstrance: for Henry, who would have again interfered to stop such outrageous folly, was too ill to stir from bed; Miss Thornton was too engrossed receiving the attentions of Edwardes and Johnson, both of whom she regarded as her love-stricken slaves, to think of aught besides; and Frederick Somerton was too absorbed with his cousin Geraldine, and too young to act the part of protector to his sister.

Driving one day along the coast to Mers-el-Kebir, the Portus Divinus of the Romans, St. Bertrand stopped the carriage, and leading the way on foot to the edge of the cliff, told of a romantic incident that had occurred at the spot of old, and from which the place is called "Salto del Cavallo." From the top of the precipice on which they stood, the Sultan Tachfin-ben-Ali, chief of the Almoravide dynasty, leaped

down on horseback into the sea below, with his favourite Sultana in his arms, to escape from his victorious pursuer, Abd-el-Moumin, the Almohade Sultan of Tlemcen, when both he and his beautiful bride perished miserably in the waters.

On the wayside, farther on, they passed some singular caves, whose sides and roof were formed by thousands of unbroken shells, welded strongly together in a dense conglomerated mass, and which had been laid bare while engineering the new sea-road at the base of the cliffs. Edwardes was deeply interested at thus seeing the primitive stage in the formation of chalk and limestone, and alighted to examine, along with Johnson, the singular geological curiosity.

"I think I know a trifle or two about caves," said the American, as he joined Edwardes. "The other day I explored, along with some scientific residents in Algiers, a large mammoth cave, lately discovered away along the coast to the westward, near the Pointe Pescade, where the remains of several extinct antediluvian animals were found mixed up with human bones, and with stone weapons belonging to the prehistoric ages. These caves are valuable in demonstrating the antiquity of the world as well as of the human race, leading pretty considerably to a modification of existing theo-

ries. What was good enough a generation or two back won't pass muster now. We are beyond going in for milk diet, and require strong food to satisfy our hungering after knowledge."

"Yes, but is the strong food you want wholesome nourishment?" asked Wilton. "Too often our modern philosophers introduce startling theories, solely with the object, as I believe, of drawing public attention to their originality of intellect in developing novel ideas, without the slightest regard to the truthfulness or even the probability of what they so dictatorially propound. For instance, may not the human remains you saw be those of cave-dwellers who occupied the place ages after the extinct savage animals died there? It is, at all events, a more probable hypothesis than that they all lived and died there all together, in the 'happy family' style, which your theory would seem to imply."

"Well, perhaps so," Johnson replied, giving his shoulders a sceptical shrug. "But to go back to our muttons, as the French say. Of what account are these little rabbit-burrow holes they call caves here compared to our gigantic caverns in America? You should go and look at the Mammoth Caves in Kentucky, Britisher; they are worth a visit, I can tell you. Talk of your Assyrian, Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, Indian, or Chinese antiquities!—they are but

things of yesterday, compared with the vast stalagmite and stalactite columns adorning those boundless subterranean regions, which are at least twenty-five thousand years old! Talk of your church architecture!—why, in one of the caverns, about one hundred and fifty feet long by sixty feet wide, the stalactites and stalagmites connect the roof with the ground, so as to present the appearance of a perfect Gothic church; for each pair of these massive columns, which average fourteen feet in circumference, form, when they reach the roof, a complete and graceful arch. Talk, too, of your Pyramids of Egypt!—you think their interior spaces vast, and so they are, I grant you; your Matlock Cave in Derbyshire, with its subterranean river, is respectable too; so are the Caves of Elephanta at Bombay, and those of Adelsberg, in the Styrian Mountains; but they are not fit to name the same day as ours. Why, one day alone we followed out to the farther extremity a ramification of passages, galleries, and caverns for upwards of nine miles. It was early in the forenoon when we started on our journey, and we did not get back until after eight o'clock in the evening, having travelled in this subterranean expedition about nineteen miles: up and down, over shingly ridges of hills, along rapid torrents, and across wide rivers in skiffs—sometimes squeezing through

mere cracks and fissures in the wall, sometimes emerging forth into some vast hall, sometimes wandering along a corridor resembling the adit to a mine, and sometimes clambering over steep mountain-ranges hundreds of feet in height. These are what you may call caves, I reckon. There are fishes, too, in those underground rivers; but they have got no eyes in their heads, and for the best of reasons, because they do not want them in the dark."

"The fishes in the Caves of Adelsberg, in Styria," interrupted Henry, "have the same peculiarity."

"Such is the case," the American replied, "and for the same reason too. Big as are these huge caves," he went on, "they were formerly inhabited by aborigines. The marks of fireplaces still exist, and several remains of mummies are yet to be seen, fully as old as those of Thebes; and plenty of splinters of bark and fragments of linen lie about on the ground—the remnants of what once enclosed the dead. One first-rate mummy was discovered and carried away. It was the body of a female about six feet high, and dried up so that it weighed but twenty pounds. They are always discovering fresh caves there. While I was staying at the adjoining hotel we worked into a crevice where we came upon an immense gallery five miles long. I guess, stranger, you think these places

are unwholesome to live in, from want of ventilation. Well, now, you never made a greater mistake in all your life. The air in them is so pure and invigorating that invalids often live underground there for weeks together. Although a bit mopish, they come up as sound as bells, as strong as bulls, and as hungry as hawks."

"It is fairly beyond my comprehension that any one should take up his abode in such a dismal spot, unless he wanted to hide from his creditors," exclaimed Wilton.

"Bless you, there is nothing dismal about the place!" Johnson replied. "Just light up those halls of glittering stalactites and stalagmites, and you will have a gorgeous palace, such as would dazzle the eyes of even an Oriental monarch, and would make Aladdin hide his diminished head after blowing out his disgraced magic-lamp in despair. We had a first-rate ball down there, which was one of the smartest affairs in creation. A whole bevy of beautifully dressed and charming girls came from a watering-place in the neighbourhood, and made the vast space look like an enchanted fairy scene as they danced and flitted about through the sparkling courts."

After driving on a short distance they got out of the carriage and descended a steep path to the edge of the sea to visit the Baths of the

Queen, so called after the visits paid to these hot springs by Crazy Jane, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella and mother of the Emperor Charles V., who frequently resorted thither after the capture of Oran by Cardinal Ximenes. These ancient baths are most curious in design, adhering to the side of the rock in semicircular protuberances like swallows' nests, instead of resting upon the ground. The heat in the small dark caverns containing the baths is intense, and so is likewise the temperature of the water which issues from the mountain above.

At the *table d'hôte* dinner, after their return, a little stumpy, fussy, pudding-headed, crimson-visaged, grey-haired old man amused them considerably by sitting down to table wrapped up in greatcoat and comforter, who scowled fiercely at the open door of the *salle à manger*, through which the wind swept up from the street. Doubtless he would gladly have worn his hat likewise but for the presence of the ladies.

When the company were breaking up he entered into conversation with Edwardes, next whom he had sat during dinner. He was an Orangeman, and one of the most bigoted outrageous madmen ever met with at large. He was furious at the passing of the Act for disestablishing and disendowing the Irish Protestant

Church, and was as violent against England for her perfidy as any Fenian rebel.

"From this day, sir," he screamed out, "I renounce my allegiance to England! The old flag is nothing to me now—the flag under which I wasted away my youth and my strength—'the flag that braved a thousand years the battle and——ah, thank you—the breeze.' I thought the word should rhyme with 'seas.' What is that flag to me, I say, now? I despise it—I scorn it! I trample on it thus—thus; there's my loyalty for you! What would my poor old grandfather say if he could put up his grey head out of his grave and see his grandson trampling on that flag—that old flag? Is not that a pretty pass for loyal Protestants to be brought to by that infernal Gladstone? There is no place too bad, sir, for that man, either in this world or the next. I tell you, sir, he will never stop till he brings the whole British Empire tumbling about our ears."

"But do not you think," said Edwardes, striving to edge in a word, "that it is wise for England to retrace her mistaken steps towards Ireland, and redress at last the grievances of centuries? What nation could tamely submit to the wrongs that have been inflicted upon that unhappy land?"

"Don't talk to me," he savagely answered, "about wrongs and grievances! It is the Pro-

testants who have been wronged and aggrieved. England has plundered us, sir—robbed us and plundered us! But I tell you what—we won't submit to it. We will show England her mistake. We will all rise as one man, and win our own back by the strong arm."

"Do you think, then," Edwardes answered, "that England would sit quietly by with folded arms?—would allow you to thus set her legislation at defiance, and get up a revolution?"

"No, I don't," he said, purple with fury. "Now you see why I stamp on the old flag in the dust. England must go to the wall, sir!—we must turn England out of Ireland, and every man belonging to her, bag and baggage! Then we shall have a clear stage to go in at the infernal Papists, and you will see what intelligence and pluck will do against the cowardly crew. Before I left the old country every fellow in the best houses in Tipperary was game to have at them, and you'll see if we don't do it yet."

"You surely do not mean to say," his antagonist interrupted, "that you would incite to civil war, if you had the chance, and imbrue your hands in the blood of your countrymen, for the sake of a squabble about the worldly status and the emoluments of your Church? for, remember, there is no interference with freedom of religion involved, as was the case in the Dark Ages, when men were persecuted for the sake of

their religious opinions. The matter is simply a social and a money question."

"Well, I do not admit I would go so far as to massacre them," he replied, "but at the same time I . . . in short, those Papists are an infernal nuisance!"

"For the matter of that," mercilessly continued Edwardes, "the Catholics probably think the Orangemen an infernal nuisance!"

"Don't call them Catholics," he furiously exclaimed, so red in the face as to seem in danger of an apoplectic fit; "they are only Roman Catholics. I am surprised to hear any Protestant call them Catholics; the thing is an absurdity. The Protestant Church is the Catholic Church."

"Catholic," rejoined his placid tormentor, "means 'universal,' and you surely do not mean to affirm that the Church of England can be termed the Universal Church. Excellent though it is, nobody can deny that it contains within its pale only a small portion of the human race."

"I am not talking of that, sir," he answered, rather evasively. "What I maintain is that, take all the Protestant Churches together, they make an aggregate that is not to be despised. And as to intelligence, why we could knock all the Papists in the world into next week in half an hour."

Finding it hopeless to argue any further with

such a wrong-headed maniac, Edwardes made an excuse for departing, and leaving the deluded bigot, under the belief that he was master of the field—trampling wildly on his old flag, and breathing fury and slaughter, like Saul before his conversion, against all who held religious sentiments different from his own.

But the Yankee, coming up at this moment, carried on the attack against the irascible Hibernian.

“Why cannot you Irish patch up your quarrels?” he inquired of the unreasoning champion of class and sectarian ascendancy. “When your countrymen go to America they are the pest and torment of the country, always fostering religious disturbances and longing to cut each other’s throats. That is not the way to promote charity and brotherly love, those firstfruits of Christianity.”

“We Orangemen are forced to organize in self-defence,” angrily answered the son of Erin.

“I don’t believe a word of it,” the American coolly proceeded, without heeding the irritation of the other. “You are just as open to censure as the Catholics—or the Roman Catholics, as you choose them to be called. Were you to set the example of peace, goodwill, and harmony, rest assured it would soon be appreciated and imitated.”

: These taunts the little Orangeman could stand no longer; so, buttoning himself up carefully, and drawing his hat close over his eyes, he rushed from the room in a tempest of scornful rage.

CHAPTER II.

SPREADING THE TOILS.

ADULATION and declarations of admiration or love St. Bertrand studiously withheld now from Olinda. They were superfluous, and their employment at present might weaken his power of attack. Rightly he judged that she would fret and chafe at this apparent neglect, and that her ears would long to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he wisely or unwisely. He considered her his prey, as surely as a hooked salmon, whom it only requires caution and gentle handling to land safely on the shore. Roughness or precipitancy might snap the line, and the captive might escape.

His policy, therefore, was to avoid putting her on her guard—to avoid awaking the slightest apprehension of sinister intentions. His plans were laid, his friend had proceeded in advance to mature them, and it only remained to induce her to take the bait that was set in her path.

Olinda and Raoul one day ascended the lofty

peak of the Aïdour, which rises to a height of twelve hundred feet straight out of the sea at the western extremity of the town. On their way to the Bordj-el-Djebel, or Fort of Santa Cruz—a fortress built by the Spaniards during the two hundred and fifty years their occupation of the country around lasted, and which is perched on the extreme sharp apex of the mountain—they passed a number of beautiful rock-plants, the *Genista fragrans*, lavender, a delicate variety of furze, and many other rare flowers and shrubs, which Olinda pointed out with the keen relish of a botanist to the hardened libertine beside her, who falsely pretended to feel interest in her discoveries. But he cared for none of these things, considering such studies tame, and beneath the notice of a man who lived only for excitement and for action.

He loved with unfeigned pleasure, however, to contemplate the picturesque and the beautiful, and joined Olinda with genuine feeling in admiring the magnificent panoramic view that extended around them as they stood beside the lofty Bordj-el-Djebel. Down at their feet lay Oran, occupying the ravine of Ouahran, which extended to the seashore, and in which were situated the tastefully arranged public gardens of the city; right and left extended the wild range of the Atlas, while to the south were seen the Great Sebkha, or salt lake of Oran,

bounded by the Tessala Mountains and by the vast Plain of Sig, stretching away to the horizon.

"Before you leave this part of the country, Miss Somerton," carelessly remarked the traitor, "you must visit Tlemcen, on the other side of that Sebkha—a most beautiful spot, abounding in objects of interest."

"Nothing would please me more," she artlessly replied; "but of course until my cousin recovers it will be impossible to undertake any excursions. He cannot be left alone, with none to watch and tend him. Besides, it would be unkind not to wait till he was able to accompany us and share our enjoyment."

This was disappointment to the ardent expectant lover; but time did not press, and he could afford to wait.

"Very right and proper feeling," he answered with mock gravity, though enraged at heart, most of all at learning that his abhorred enemy was watched and tended by the beloved Anglaise. "Whenever our expedition to Tlemcen comes off," he added, "I have arranged for a boar-hunt on a large scale among that range of mountains you see to the south. This *chasse* will be solely in honour of yourself, Miss Somerton, and I trust the result of my exertions may meet with your approval."

Olinda, colouring with pleasure, returned her thanks, and assured him how anxiously she

would look forward to the day when she could avail herself of his kindness. Often, she said, she had desired to witness a boar-hunt, which must be highly interesting and exciting.

"Certain I feel that you will enjoy your day," he replied, with an ominous fiendish smile. "Hereafter you will often look back to its incidents with pleasure and gratitude."

The remarkable manner in which St. Bertrand and Olinda passed their whole time together had long been a source of angry criticism on the part of Johnson and Edwardes. They thought their young friend highly indiscreet in compromising herself to such an extent, especially with one of whose private affairs and personal character she was altogether ignorant.

On hearing of the contemplated expedition under the auspices and escort of the Frenchman, they were exceeding displeased, and they resolved to stop, if possible, the unwise and ill-considered project. With this view they sought to take Alice Thornton into their counsels, urging the impropriety of her niece's conduct, and the danger she incurred of being evil spoken of in consequence.

"What can I do?" exclaimed the silly weak-minded woman, in reply to their earnest representations. "Against Olinda I feel powerless; she awes me, and sets my advice at defiance. Then Henry is too unwell to be told what is

going on, and Frederick is too young to come into collision with a haughty domineering man, who would not fail to insult him for his interference."

"Then my friend Johnson and I will take the matter in hand ourselves," exclaimed Edwardes with decision.

This determination terrified the weak helpless creature, who dreaded being dragged into the dispute; for she saw Olinda loved the hussar, and would resent the attempt to cross her path. No Platonic affection was this, she well knew.

"Olinda will be so angry," she piteously pleaded.

"Angry, or not angry," said Edwardes sternly, "we consider her under our protection, through the illness of her cousin, and we are resolved that she shall not be made appear ridiculous any longer. Let this gallant hussar go and practise his alluring deceptive arts elsewhere; he shall not amuse himself at the expense of our charming young friend. We like him not, Miss Thornton, no more does Henry Wilton; we believe him to be a smooth-tongued, false, depraved adventurer, and a dangerous companion for a virtuous trusting woman."

Finding them intent on their design, she besought of them not to implicate her in any trouble.

"Be not alarmed—we promise you faithfully,"

answered Edwardes and the American, though feeling the profoundest contempt for the cowardice and selfishness of the old woman, who would sacrifice her niece's happiness sooner than run the risk of being taken to task and censured by the headstrong girl.

"The would-be-juvenile old lady tries so hard to get hold of us, I thought she would have taken our part through thick and thin," exclaimed Johnson, after she had left.

"The pusillanimous creature!—so did I!" replied Edwardes, indignant at her cowardly abandonment of her niece in the hour of danger.

Awaiting their opportunity, when St. Bertrand was away from her side, the two told Olinda, as privileged friends, their distress and alarm on her account, and warned her of the risks she might incur by receiving the attentions of a man of whose antecedents she knew so little.

They were prepared for a painful scene; but Olinda, to their surprise, received their expostulations in an apparently grateful spirit, though firmly expressing her determination not to be guided by their counsels.

"You both know," she said, with one of her winning smiles, "my desire for rational intellectual conversation, such as few of my own sex can take part in or appreciate. Mental exercise

and culture I love; they fascinate, they elevate; but such can be met only in the society of men, and men, too, of capacity and refinement. Both of you ever afford me constant gratification, by your superior qualities and attainments, as you are well aware, and I should regret excessively being forbidden the agreeable privilege of associating with you on intimate terms."

This graceful compliment, coming from a lovely fascinating young girl, won the hearts of the two friends, who bowed their acknowledgments.

"And is my delightful acquaintance, the Marquis de St. Bertrand, to be the only exception?" she triumphantly demanded. "Why is it that I may converse with you all day long, if I choose, but must not even speak to him? Why can I not improve my mind listening to what drops from his lips?"

"My dear young lady," Edwardes interrupted, smiling, "the answer is, that the world will say more drops from his lips than mere dry dissertations on learned matters; in short, that soft words are whispered into your ear on subjects more generally congenial to the female heart, and which are not always edifying or improving to the mind."

"The world are fools!" she answered pettishly. "They have no soul to comprehend the sublimity of talent. It is beyond the grasp of their

dull gross minds—beyond the range of their dwarfed vision! Little better are they than the beasts that perish. They are mere walking and talking vegetables, beneath contempt!”

“And so my accompanying you to the Tessala Mountains is an offence in your nostrils?” she resumed with her wonted playful good-humour. “Would it not be hard, though, on Monsieur de St. Bertrand, who is arranging the boar-hunt there exclusively for me, that the principal person should keep aloof?—that the play of ‘Hamlet’ should be performed with the part of Hamlet omitted by particular desire? The Marquis tells me he is already expending large sums of money on the preparations, and that I am to have ‘a great surprise.’ Surely it would be ungenerous to disappoint him, after taking such pains to oblige, and to cater for our amusement.”

“Have your way, then, dear Miss Somerton; but we still raise our warning voice against what you are doing,” said both her prudent but discarded advisers. “You cannot foresee what risks you may run by placing yourself in the power of a man, who, for aught you know to the contrary, may be thoroughly heartless and unprincipled. We have discharged our duty—more we cannot do.”

“Pardon me,” she interrupted, with a smile slightly tinged with scorn. “You are allowing

your prejudices and inclinations to carry away your judgment captive. You like not this gentleman, and you seek to blacken his reputation by these damaging insinuations. It is hardly fair or becoming to throw out behind his back such covert accusations against a man who is an officer, a gentleman, and a person of high rank, connected too with several of the most distinguished families in France."

As she left the room, exhibiting a *souffron* of offended dignity, they both bewailed the obstinate obtuse infatuation of the gifted genius, and expressed their fears that evil would yet arise from this foolish though hitherto harmless liaison with the Frenchman.

"What does this St. Bertrand mean by saying the arrangements for the hunt are to cost him such a lot of money?" said Edwardes, musing. "The Bureau Arabe officers order the Kaïd of the district to turn out his whole tribe for the *chasse*, and the great man is bound to obey the command without a shilling of expense to his superiors."

"So I thought," returned the Yankee. "I understand not nor do I like the expression."

Such power had St. Bertrand acquired over Olinda that she now confided to him all her innermost thoughts, deeming it disloyal to withhold any secret from his knowledge. On leaving her true friends she sought this false friend, to

whom she imparted the conversation that had just taken place.

Anger darkened his handsome features on hearing the recital, but he could see she was uninfluenced by the remonstrances of those who would guide her aright, and that to him she remained as true as steel. His attention was directed solely, therefore, to removing by diplomacy the antagonism of her friends against his deep designing plans. With this view, curbing his angry revengeful feelings, he sought them out.

"Miss Somerton informs me," he began, assuming a humble and aggrieved manner, "that my poor offers of service have not been received in good part, and that my project for our going in a party to Tlemcen has not met with your approval. Why this view should be taken, and why you should refuse to be my guests on the occasion, I am unable even to guess. From Miss Somerton and her relations I have met with invariable kindness, and you, Mr. Edwardes, were good enough to invite me on board your yacht. It was therefore natural that I should desire to make some slight return. However, as the proposal is unwelcome, it only remains to withdraw it, and to express my regret at having unwarily intruded, where my interference was unwished for."

This was a dangerous card to play, but he

knew it would win, and it did win. He appeared so deeply hurt and mortified at the slight offered in return for his proffered hospitality, that he made their refusal of his overtures look churlish and ill-mannered. It was agreed, though with much secret reluctance, that his invitation should be accepted, for what ostensible reason could they offer for holding back? Thereupon he coldly and rather contemptuously expressed his satisfaction at "the mistake" having been rectified.

"What a fool to tell me these wise men were trying to save her!" he ejaculated, with a scoffing sneer, on leaving. "Had she held her tongue, I should have failed and lost her for ever."

Olinda bestowed warm encomiums on her lover for advocating her cause so ably, and converting her opponents. Strange with what absolute power this man ruled her noble intellect, and how childishly helpless she had become in his hands!

Henry's feverish attack having passed away, a day was fixed for starting. At the time appointed the party left Oran for Tlemcen, passing, on their way along the shores of the Great Sebkhah, the village of Missergiuin, famous for its thousands of orange-trees, where in the days of the Turks the Beys of Oran and their officers of state owned delightful summer resi-

dences upon the banks of the great inland salt-water lake.

Crossing the salt river that runs down from the Sebkha to the sea, they farther on passed close to the famous quarries of jasper, onyx, and agate, whence the Tlemcen Sultans procured the yellow, rose, white, dark-brown, orange, and pale-green columns, flagstones, and doorways adorning their palaces and mosques, and whence the Romans are believed to have taken large contributions for beautifying the Eternal City.

Upon the high ground, just before reaching the Oued Amieur, the travellers stopped to admire the splendid view obtained here of Tlemcen, "the Queen of the Mar'reb," or "Land of the West," standing aloft backed by its bold mountain-range, and embowered in lovely gardens and fruit orchards.

The road by which they ascended to the town winds through groves of huge olive-trees, carefully irrigated by small sparkling streams, and through peach, pomegranate, and apricot trees, interlaced with gigantic vines, which twist their huge coils round the fruit-laden boughs. Amid this rich mass of foliage a ruined Moorish villa peeps forth here and there, or a pure icy rill dashes down the brow, bearing health and life to the luxurious vegetation below.

No sooner had they arrived than St. Bertrand hastened to find Auguste Pécoul.

"Well, Pécoul," he exclaimed eagerly, "is all prepared?"

"All," rejoined his friend. "For her I have secured a fleet horse that will defy pursuit. I have taken into our secret three sergeants of Zouaves, splendid fellows and thorough dare-devils, compelled to serve in the army from having got into trouble with their families—fellows who desire nothing better than a reckless adventure like ours. Our Spahi uniforms are ready, and every detail is arranged."

"Then you feel pretty confident now, I suppose?"

"Confident we shall succeed in the kidnapping," Auguste answered; "but by no means confident, as I told you all along, as to your eventual success. She will resist to the death!"

"*Nous verrons*," said Raoul with a knowing look and a shake of his head. "My dear fellow, she will do any blessed thing I ask. Would you believe, she makes me her father-confessor, and not a single secret will she keep from me. But for her warning me in confidence of the conspiracy that was on foot to save her, by preventing her coming here into the lion's jaw, all our trouble would have been lost, and I should be plunged into a sorrowful state of discomfiture to-day. Make your mind easy, my dear Auguste, as to the ultimate result. What can she do? What good will come of sitting all day in the

sulks and growling whenever I go near her? She would punish herself far more than me; for she would be under lock-and-key, while I could go about and amuse myself."

"Coercion never gains woman," answered Auguste, "except when carried to the last extremity, to which I take for granted you will never resort."

"There will be no necessity, my dear Pécoul," continued St. Bertrand, after reflecting. "So deeply does she love me that she will soon tire of perpetual refusals."

"She may love you now, I grant," said Pécoul; "but she will learn presently to hate you, when she finds you are her gaoler, and she will pine to burst her prison-bars and escape. She will kill you, or you will have to kill her."

"Preposterous nonsense!" Raoul exclaimed. "You know nothing of how to manage a refractory woman. Where a woman loves—mind, that is an essential condition—a man need but to exhibit a little judicious hypocrisy, pretending to be smitten down with broken-hearted agony and with an accumulation of miseries generated by her cruel treatment to melt the fair obstructionist into tears and bring her in pitying submission to her knees."

"Suppose all to go right, how about the future?" asked Auguste. "'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' But will the beauty never

fade? Will you never weary? You know how liaisons end."

"Let the future take care of itself," gaily answered St. Bertrand. "We need only trouble ourselves about the present, and enjoy the swift-winged hours as they pass. If needs be, cannot the girl hereafter return to her friends with a story of pining in dungeons, and hairbreadth escapes, and murderous ruffians with drawn scimitars, and leaping down precipices, and flesh-corroding fetters, and all the rest? Who is to be the wiser? Who is to say her nay? But why do you seek thus to unnerve me and draw me away from my settled purpose, Auguste?" he resumed after a pause. "Surely after proceeding so far you are not taking fright."

"Certainly not," the other replied. "You forget that you began this discussion yourself by your questions. For my part I had no intention of reopening the subject. Devoutly I wish that your desire may be realised, and I will acquit myself of my share like a true and honest friend."

"He doubts my being a wellwisher for his triumph over this girl's scruples," Pécoul soliloquised after his friend had left, "little suspecting how genuine are my professions of goodwill. Little he suspects my plots for the future, or the burning desire that has been kindled in

my breast of late to possess her eventually, when he has paved the way! Let her return to her family indeed, when he wearies of her, and her charms pall upon his palate! No—no. The fair being is too beautiful and too lovable to be consigned to a life of seclusion and neglect—she! who is worthy to breathe only an atmosphere of admiration, homage, and love! When she sways his heart no longer, and they part, then will come my opportunity, then shall she be mine. Many would carry off the beauteous prize themselves when in their grasp, as this glorious angel will be in mine within a few hours! Such unprincipled, ungentlemanlike treachery to my friend I scorn! I am a man of honour. But I bide my time.”

CHAPTER III.

THE QUEEN OF THE MAR'REB.

THE Kaïd of the tribe on whose territory the boar-hunt was to take place and his Khalifa (or Lieutenant) being both absent from their post on business, the event had to be deferred for a couple of days, to the grievous disappointment of St Bertrand, who was on the tiptoe of expectation for the moment to arrive when his vile scheme should be put into execution. Concealing, however, his vexation, he undertook to occupy the interval by showing whatever in the town and environs possessed any interest, for he was well acquainted with the locality from former visits.

Edwardes and Olinda inquired of Raoul whether any vestiges remained of the important Roman city of Pomaria, on the site of which Tlemcen, "the Queen of the Mar'reb," was constructed.

"Very few," he replied. "A small outdoor museum of antiquities has been established at the

Mairie. The principal object of interest there," he added, smiling, "is the false Royal cubit measure made by order of the Sultan Abou Tachfin, which, by being an inch too short, gave his subjects a great advantage in their dealings with the Europeans who come to trade in the city.

"This is the Mechouar, the ancient Kasbah, or Palace, of the several dynasties who ruled at Tlemcen," said Raoul as they came to a huge pile of building in the centre of the town, now converted into barracks, and containing a military hospital and prison, "built by the Sultan Yousouf-ben-Tachfin on the spot where his tent stood when he came to conquer the country of the Mar'reb."

The gallant hussar then narrated the accounts given by the Arab historians of the beauties and marvels of this luxurious abode, where the Sultans of Tlemcen, surrounded by fabulous wealth and magnificence, attracted to their court philosophers, poets, and artists from all quarters of the globe. He described the mechanical tree of solid silver possessed by the Sultan Abou-Tachfin, covered with singing-birds, which poured forth the notes peculiar to their several species until scared by a falcon that swooped among them and drove them for safety beneath the dense foliage.

The sumptuous banquet given in the Mechouar in honour of the Birth of the Prophet,

by the Sultan Abou-Hammon-Moussa he also told of, where thousands of the monarch's subjects, rich and poor alike, were entertained in regal magnificence, the great source of astonishment and admiration being the famous mendjana or mechanical clock, constructed for the occasion by Ibn-el-Fahham, the mathematician of Tlemcen. This marvellous work of art, decorated with gold and silver figures of chaste design, represented the path of the Moon in the heavens. It also represented amongst other marvels a serpent that attracted the young brood of a bird, two eagles that fought together on the edge of a golden reservoir and afterwards darted after the serpent, and a beautiful slave that came out through a door to tell the hour in verse on an open book she held in her hand.

"This wondrous piece of mechanism," added Edwardes, "was made at the latter end of the fourteenth century, thus preceding by two hundred years the famous clock at Strasbourg of Conrad Dasyphodus, which has ever since been considered one of the wonders of the world."

Geraldine had been watching with great gusto the breathless interest with which Olinda listened to, and the admiring eagerness with which she drank in, every syllable St. Bertrand uttered. The young lady's conviction that Henry was the object of her cousin's affection had latterly become considerably modified, and she owned

that the French officer was now first favourite. The change she greatly deplored, for Olinda she would have loved as a sister-in-law. However, this feeling of disappointment interfered not with her innate love of mischievous merriment.

The precocious child, addressing Raoul as she slyly surveyed the lovers, exclaimed what a singular coincidence it was that he should be present describing the wonders of the Kasbah at Tlemcen, for did not he remember it was at the Kasbah in Algiers they first made his acquaintance. "How fortunate for Olinda," she continued, "to have always such an invaluable cicerone by her side!" As she mischievously anticipated, both became confused for a moment, but Olinda soon recovered her self-possession.

"Just what occurred to my mind," she quietly observed. "I have always looked back with pleasure to our good fortune in meeting the Marquis on that occasion, and trust our friendship may long endure."

"You are very good, Mademoiselle, to speak so kindly. Alas! I know, though, that a day of parting must come," he sighed in pretended grief at the contemplation of so great a calamity, though confident of preventing its occurrence. "You will return to Europe; I shall remain here; and I never shall see your face again."

"It would pain me much to think I was to part for ever from one whose society has always

afforded me such great pleasure," she replied with warmth.

They were alone now, and, seeing what he said had touched her heart, he went on, as he took her hand in his: "Oh! say you will be my bride, dearest Olinda, and then we shall never part."

"It cannot be," she replied with a deep sigh. "You know my decision to remain free and unfettered."

"Will you give me no hope, then?" he continued entreatfully, perceiving that no danger existed of being drawn into marriage, which he desired no longer now that he knew of her comparative poverty. "Will your heart never become softened? Will you ever meet me thus with cold indifference?"

"Some day it may be otherwise," she sadly replied, "but married life I desire not at present. You forget, too, that I am penniless, and should be but a burden to you through life—a log in your path."

The declarations of devotion and disinterested affection which her lover was about to pour into Olinda's ear, while indignantly disclaiming all mercenary motives, were interrupted by the wild gesticulations and ejaculations of a large crowd that moved rapidly at some distance through the large open grassy square in the centre of the town.

Frederick and Geraldine ran to discover the

cause of this uproar, and presently signalled so earnestly to the rest to follow that they hastened to the spot.

Here a strange scene awaited them. The great Mahometan Festival, the *Fête des Moutons*, was being celebrated, and part of the religious ceremonies were going forward. An enormous concourse of people were marching along, preceded by a native bearing a large banner and by several musicians playing a wild monotonous drone on tambourines and flutes. In front of these advanced a row of uncouth creatures, who occasionally halted to perform religious dances. One man wore long dishevelled hair, which he tossed about in the air as he rolled his head from side to side, and another had his hair plaited like a Chinese in a pigtail that hung from the top of his skull, and kept bobbing his head backwards and forwards.

The most outlandish of all, however, was a Black, of the genuine negro type, a most animal-looking being, who swayed his body about without ceasing, and allowed the moisture from his lips to fall over his filthy dress.

After proceeding a few yards, the procession halted, when these horrid savages commenced a frantic dance, two of them whirling themselves round and springing at each other, on which one lifted the other bodily high up into the air, the whole madly yelling in time with the music.

By degrees they became violently excited, indulging in gesticulations of increasing wildness, the Black in particular, at whom the rest pointed and howled, to encourage him in his disgusting contortions.

A Marabout now came forward and handed the negro an orange which, animal-like, he gorged voraciously. The Black and another foul wretch chewed and swallowed immense mouthfuls of the leaves of the variegated thistle, presented by the Marabout, holding their hands behind their backs, and imitating the habits of camels by drawing the leaves into their mouths with their tongues.

The Marabout then dropped an orange on the ground, upon which the Black flung himself with savage cries, devouring it just as it was, covered with the dirt of the road. A second was thrown down for him, but this a little Moorish boy snatched up and ran off with, amid the execrations of the devout Moslems and the applauding merriment of the remaining spectators.

The black performer by this time began to wax violent, to glare and yell frightfully, and to rush about through the crowd, so as to freeze with terror the soul of Miss Thornton, who trembled whenever the howling maniac approached.

Seeing the nervous apprehension of the old lady, a fine tall fellow, dressed in Zouave costume, came out of the crowd, and advised her,

as well as her friends, to put themselves under his protection, as these enthusiasts at times became delirious and dangerous through religious frenzy. He led the party through the midst of the performers, and procured them the best places.

As the procession was on its way to the house of a Marabout close at hand, he volunteered to take them inside to witness the ceremonies, which would include many astonishing sights.

In the court of the Marabout's residence a thickly packed mass of people, attracted by the solemn festival, were already assembled; but the Zouave elbowed his way through and had chairs brought out for his protégées to sit upon, after which he mysteriously disappeared.

The marked intimacy that had sprung up afresh during his illness at Oran between the Marquis St. Bertrand and his cousin renewed the great uneasiness Henry Wilton had long felt on her behalf. He perceived they were scarce ever apart, and that Olinda gave this designing stranger every encouragement. He determined therefore to mark his disapproval, and to check, were he able, this ill-omened flirtation. His mind was still distracted thinking of Azzahra—wondering how she came to fall among such a band of ruffians at the wreck, wondering whether she had escaped, wondering whether she had drawn down her father's ire. But he would not

allow his own mournful reflections to engross wholly his attention. Olinda's case was urgent, and, he saw, called for prompt and decided action. The present offered an opportunity to commence displaying his displeasure, and he turned it to account. Placing a chair with affected nonchalance beside Olinda, he seated himself so as to get between her and the Frenchman.

The latter perceived the move was made in hostility, and turned on Henry a scowl of defiance the other met with a firm, steady, unimpassioned gaze, which soon made the hussar perceive that bullying would not avail.

Olinda was much distressed and annoyed at Henry's behaviour, and remonstrated with him in whispers on what she called his discourteous rudeness in offending the man who was going to act as their host.

"I was thoughtless and precipitate, I own," he replied, "and should have waited till his hospitalities were concluded."

"You mean, in fact, that you ought to get out of him all you could and then give him the cold shoulder?" she answered with much acrimony.

"I mean that this sort of thing must cease," he peremptorily retorted. "Your brother is too young to come forward and protect you, so I shall act in his stead. Severely I blame myself for having held back so long."

“You intend, then, to be a ruler and a judge over me?” she scornfully asked.

“For God’s sake, Olinda, do not get up a scene,” he whispered. “We will talk this over another time.”

On one side of the court where they were seated stood the Marabout’s house, filled with the performers and persons of distinction, and round the other sides rose low flat-roofed houses, on the tops of which were congregated numbers of veiled women, and unveiled female children wearing conical caps of purple velvet, and attired in gaudy print dresses and tawdry jewellery.

A ring of dancers now formed round a tree in the centre of the court, and the performers went through the same operations as when outside in the street, springing suddenly together and lifting each other up among the boughs of the trees. This greatly pleased the women and children above, who uttered loud cries of “lou-lou” at each blow of a head against the branches. The drowning music was maintained vigorously the while, and the two “camels” continued to devour oranges, thistles, and prickly-pear leaves, which latter must have considerably deranged their interior economy, for even on the hand the little venomous thorns of this plant produce irritation which does not subside for a couple of days. However the wild devotees appeared to

relish the diet much, and the holy Marabout kept up a liberal supply.

A man now personated a sheep, and another a jackal which tried to kill the sheep. The rest endeavoured to drive off the jackal; but, as he persevered in his attacks, two men lifted up the personator of the sheep, his hands resting on the shoulders of one, and his feet on those of the other, the body being stretched out between at full length. In this uncomfortable position he was borne several times round the court, and dragged through the boughs of the tree, for the special entertainment of the fair spectators on the housetops, while the jackal continued to leap up, striving to reach his prey.

The fellow with the wild floating hair, who all this time had been working himself up to the needful pitch of enthusiasm by swaying his body about violently in time with the music, now darted into the house of the Marabout, and brought out in his hand a chafing-dish full of red-hot pieces of charcoal. Some of these he held between his teeth for several seconds, and then flung them into a vessel of water, to prove by their hissing in the fluid that they were still burning hot. Unbounded applause greeted this performance, when he again took a hot coal into his mouth; but this time, instead of holding his lips apart as he had done before, he closed them

on the glowing mass, and afterwards blew forth blazing flames of lurid fire.

To the astonishment of Alice Thornton, the next who came forward as a performer was her Zouave acquaintance, who far eclipsed all others by his wonderful achievements. He had removed his fez, and his long sweeping hair was hanging wildly about his shoulders. He advanced to a brazier of burning charcoal placed on the ground into which incense was thrown, and he swung round his head and arms over the rising vapour with furious energy for several minutes, when he removed his richly embroidered jacket and then his under garments, so that the upper part of his body was quite uncovered, all the time his head rocking, and his dishevelled hair swinging in the wind.

On his making a signal, a Marabout presented him with a naked scimitar, whereupon he kissed the holy man's feet, and then ran the sword across his own tongue. On this two men stepped out from the crowd and held up the scimitar between them; when he flung himself upon it on his bare stomach, and in this way he was carried three times round the courtyard. When he stopped the sword had sunk deep into the soft flesh of his stomach, which had folded over in thick rolls, so that it required an effort to drag out the weapon. A deep red welt remained, but no blood flowed.

Rapturous lou-lous of delight echoed from the houses above, but Alice Thornton was so horrified at beholding a human being, especially a man whose personal appearance pleased her much, undergoing such torture, that she shrieked aloud, to the amazement and entertainment of all present.

Her Zouave friend next stood on the weapon with his bare feet resting on its edge, and was thus carried round again by his two supporters. He then lay upon the ground on his back, when the sharp edge of the scimitar was held over his stomach by his two tormentors, while a third stood on the back of the blade so as to force it down into the flesh of the writhing victim. This appeared to inflict horrible torture, but it gave intense gratification to the veiled beauties in the upper gallery, who became louder than ever in their applauding acclamations. These feats doubtless caused the performer considerable suffering, although not nearly so much as he made believe; for, at the conclusion, he was in a profuse perspiration, and was laid down on the ground and covered over for some time. Afterwards he was supported into the house in a state of apparent exhaustion, doubtless with a severe headache after the merciless churning his brains had undergone.

The untold agonies which she believed this man endured so continued to fill the mind

of Miss Thornton with horror that, although ashamed to utter another scream, she buried her face in her hands and would look on no more.

The pace at which the performers moved now became fast and furious, several of the devotees, the revolting Black included, falling down in ecstatic swoons, in which state they were carried away to the Marabout's residence.

The Zouave went up to Miss Thornton as she and the rest of the party were leaving, apparently none the worse for all he had undergone.

"Of course you will see the conclusion of our ceremonies to-morrow?" he said, addressing the old lady, whose loud demonstrations of sympathetic compassion had amused him no little. "It will be our great day."

"Are you to be tortured again?" she asked, sorrowfully beholding him.

"No, madame; but you will see something far more amusing," he replied. "You will see men worry a live sheep to death with their teeth, and then devour it raw."

"What horrible barbarity!" she ejaculated. "And is such wicked disgusting cruelty allowed?"

"Speak not thus, madame, of our great ceremony," he pleaded in a deprecatory wounded tone. "It is part of our religion."

"What a convenient cloak is religion!" said the American apart. "It covers a multitude of

sins and enormities committed in its sacred name."

"These fellows are not bad," observed St. Bertrand, when the Zouave had departed, "but the Beni Yssou at Algiers are far superior. This tribe devour live serpents whole, run red-hot knitting-needles through their tongues and cheeks, and drag their eyes out of their sockets, passing large wooden skewers behind them while they protrude. When you return, you should see these men perform," he continued, addressing Henry, as though no angry feeling existed, and ceasing for the time his attentions to Olinda, whom he should have all to himself so soon. "We will go together if you like."

"The Red Indians in America would stand pain better than any of them," exclaimed Johnson, determined not to be outdone.

By keeping aloof from Olinda Raoul wished to allay any suspicion Wilton might entertain either then or after she was carried off, for he had noticed the altercation between her and her cousin, as well as to make the victim grieve for his absence from her side and sigh for his return.

A drive to the ruins of El-Mansoura, "the Victorious," succeeded the religious celebration of the Fête des Moutons. This immense city, considerable remains of which are still standing, was built at the end of the thirteenth century by

Abou-Yakoub, of the Merinide dynasty, for his residence when laying siege to Tlemcen, in like manner as Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain erected in eighty days the town of Santa Fè while besieging the city of Granada.

At that time Mansoura was laid out with magnificent public edifices, and with private mansions surrounded by gardens through which flowed streams of delicious water amongst the rarest shrubs and flowers. It soon rose to a high state of prosperity, and its markets were frequented by merchants and traders from distant countries. It became, in short, the most important town in all the Mar'reb.

On the fall of Tlemcen, however, and the extinction of the reigning dynasty, the Merinide sovereigns transferred their residence to that city, which they considerably beautified, while they suffered Mansoura to fall into decay.

The gay, bright deep-red colour of the ruins, consisting of baked earth, the same as what composed the walls of the Alhambra, formed a striking contrast to the green tints of the landscape around and greatly pleased the artistic eye of Olinda, who, like a moth hovering round the consuming flame, pointed this out to Raoul, in the vain hope of drawing him again into conversation.

Returning through Tlemcen on their way to the beautiful suburb of El-Eubbad, the party passed the Djemmâa Kebir, or Great Mosque,

which was partly built by the Sultan Tachfin-ben-Ali, who perished in the romantic leap with his bride into the sea at Oran, and was finished by the Sultan Yar' Moracen. When his courtiers wanted this latter monarch to inscribe his name on the minaret of the mosque, he gave the noble reply that "God knew his name already," showing thereby that what he had done was for the sole glory of God.

The approach to El-Eubbad is up a steep road along the side of a stream, shaded by carob trees, olives, aloes, and prickly pears, that dashes down from the precipitous heights of the Djebel-Terni. The way is so rough, so narrow, and so steep that a carriage cannot mount to the top. The latter part of the ascent therefore had to be made on foot, St. Bertrand still forsaking Olinda to bestow unremitting attention on Miss Thornton, to that lady's great surprise and joy.

After passing through the ruined and deserted streets of this once famous and prosperous suburb of Tlemcen, they reached the tomb of Sidi-bou-Meddin, the Mosque, and the Medersa—the group of edifices to which the place owes its celebrity.

They felt greatly surprised and pleased as they went through the mosque, which vies in richness of architecture and decoration with the best specimens of Moorish art in Spain; through

the Medersa, or college, with its spacious hall, and its cloistered courts into which the cells of the students opened—a unique specimen of an ancient seat of learning before the decadence of the Moors; and through the splendid Mausoleum of Sidi-bou-Meddin, who was styled the “Ouali,” or Friend of God, and also the “Kotb,” or Pivot of the world, around whom, as a centre, the entire universe revolved.

On descending a long flight of stone steps, and entering the spacious court below which contains the shrine of the saint, where he has reposed for seven centuries, they were much struck by the beauty of the dome overhead, with its narrow stained-glass windows letting in a mellow subdued light; the cenotaph, covered with rich silks embroidered in gold and silver; the silken standards, emblazoned with inscriptions; the ostrich eggs, tapers, chandeliers, coloured lanterns, and silken draperies—all suspended from the narrow strip of elaborately carved cedar-wood ceiling above the shrine; and the pictures, the mirrors, and the handsome octagonal timepiece which hung against the arabesque-covered walls.

After admiring this rare and chaste monument, Olinda turned to address St. Bertrand, determined not to be deprived, through Wilton's rude intermeddling, of her gay hussar's fascinating company.

"We are helpless without your aid, Marquis," she exclaimed. "Pray tell us about this wonderful Marabout, and how he became so famous."

"By working miracles," he answered.

"I hope they were as edifying as those you mentioned the other day," she continued, smiling, "by which one Marabout dispatched a hare across the sea from Oran to Malaga to fetch back an old woman's son who was a slave in that town; while another holy man caused a cat to jump up from a dish at table and run nimbly away, after it had been skinned, cut into pieces, and cooked."

"The greatest proof that Sidi-bou-Meddin was gifted with supernatural powers," returned Raoul, inwardly exultant at the poor girl's persistent pursuit, "was his inducing an outraged husband to take back a wicked, faithless wife. But though he thus established his fame as a worker of miracles, he displayed little of the spirit of prophecy, for the vile woman soon after stabbed the mean, contemptible husband, scornfully loathing his pusillanimity in receiving to his arms again the fountain of his dishonour."

"Serve him right too, the paltry skunk!" heartily ejaculated the American, who had been listening to the narration.

Olinda made St. Bertrand conduct her to the terrace of the Café Maure, close at hand, to see the fine view obtained from thence of Tlemcen

and the surrounding country. After admiring the wide-extending prospect, he told her of the beautiful spots in the Desert—the wild oases, the palms, the lovely flowers, the wondrous luxuriance of nature.

“These palm-groves, islanded in the waste, and these glorious tropical scenes, stamp a deeply graven impress on the mind,” he exclaimed with enthusiasm, “that neither time nor distance can ever efface!”

“The oases must be lovely!” she artlessly exclaimed. “I hope to visit them some day.”

“I hope so too,” he muttered. “What is more to the point, I know you will, and that right soon.”

“There are deadly vipers, though, in the Sahara,” she continued, with a gay smile. “No rose but has its thorn.”

“You they would not touch,” he gallantly answered. “Even a viper would not harm you.”

CHAPTER IV.

TO THE FRONT.

THE time arrived when Selim Mustapha and Abou Hassan, the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser, must start from Hammam R'rira for the land of the South.

After the Kaïd had sent back to his home on the Chenoua his elder wives under the charge of his brother, the oldest one bitterly inveighing against the detested Zorah, while the rest joined heartily in her virulent abuse of the favourite, the two rebels, accompanied by Zorah, Azzahra, and Kredoudja, set forth on their toilsome journey. Little apprehension of pursuit was felt by Selim Mustapha at such a distance from Algiers; still it was considered prudent by all to keep, as much as possible, away from towns, and to avail themselves, where practicable, of the hospitality of the Arabs outside, so as to evade inconvenient questionings by troublesome officials.

“Remember, I am in the same boat with

you now," said the Kaïd to Selim Mustapha, as they rode side by side. "Travellers towards the Desert are liable, at present, to draw attention and awaken suspicion."

"Too true," responded his friend; "we are by no means out of the lion's jaw yet."

"We are not," said the other, "and must incur no unnecessary risk."

While the two men thus discussed their chances of running the gauntlet through the French military posts and getting down into the Sahara, Azzahra and Zorah discoursed on subjects equally absorbing in their eyes.

"What a blessing not to be incommoded, like the ladies of Europe, with piles of luggage, when travelling!" said Azzahra, looking at the scanty supply of apparel in the panniers that hung at either side of her mule. "We make these panniers serve the double purpose of supporting our feet, and containing all our worldly goods."

"The Europeans no doubt require a mule to carry nothing but their baggage?" said Zorah.

"My dear, a mule could not do it, nor a camel either," answered Azzahra. "They have dresses innumerable, all in enormous packing-cases made of basket-work, that look heavy enough to break a mule's back, though comparatively light. I have often gone down at Algiers to see the passengers land from the

Marseilles steamer, and have wondered at the number of huge packages each lady owns."

"And all filled with beautiful dresses?" exclaimed the bride in wonder.

"Beautiful beyond belief or comprehension," Azzahra answered. "Silks and satins and velvets of every colour you can imagine, made up with such taste—trimmed all over, too, with the most exquisite black and white laces, which were so fine they looked like gossamer that you could blow away with a puff of your breath."

"How divine! and have you beheld all this, Azzahra?" asked the astonished young creature.

"Madame Lagrange, my preceptress, once took me to the Orient Hotel to see a French lady's wardrobe," said her friend, "and I could think of nothing else for a week."

"Our costume must have seemed poor and ungraceful to you afterwards," sighed Zorah. "One wearies of always seeing dresses made in the same everlasting pattern."

"Such is the fact," Azzahra said in reply. "But the beauty of the foreign jewellery," she continued, "is perfectly wondrous. Instead of our coarse and clumsy ornaments, the jewellers of Europe set their diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and every kind of precious stone, which are cut and polished to the highest point of sparkling lustre, in mountings of the most chaste and delicate workmanship."

“Oh, Azzahra! I should be so happy with a husband who would make me such lovely presents,” said Zorah, with a sigh. “How I envy you with your European lover!”

This brought back to the mind of Azzahra the terrible scene on the shore of the Chenoua, and her lover's three happy deliverances from the jaws of death. First when she sprang in front of the row of levelled firelocks to save him; next when the dog dragged him out of the waves; and afterwards when the steamer hove in sight, and sent a boat to rescue him. For she had sufficient strength and consciousness remaining to see Henry placed in safety on board the yacht, while looking back over her father's shoulder as he carried her in his arms up the mountain side.

She felt devoutly thankful for his escape and for her own. Often she deplored his absence, pining to speak with him, or even behold him, once more.

After passing along the base of the lofty peak of the Zakkar R'rarbi, they drew near to Milianah, when, descending outside the walls down a ravine at the east of the town, filled with gardens and orchards, they halted at the dwelling of a wealthy native, where Selim Mustapha had stopped upon former expeditions.

Teniet-el-Hâad was the next and the last town they would have to pass before reaching the wild regions of the Sahara, and it was felt

that should they successfully get by this southernmost French post on their route, all danger of detention would be at an end, and they would be close to the place of rendezvous on the Plain of Sersou. A short ride across the Chelif plains brought them to the banks of the river Chelif, the longest and largest river, next to the Nile, in northern Africa. Here plunging into the water on their mules, they waded with difficulty over the deep and wide ford, the ladies expecting momentarily to be immersed in the stream.

Azzahra reminded Kredoudja of the last time they had forded a river together, and they both laughed so heartily that Zorah insisted on being let into the secret, who joined loudly in the merriment when she learned how much their dresses were in the way, and how Azzahra's father was obliged, through modesty, to retire behind a place of concealment until they got well across.

When the wayfarers reached the Caravanseraï of Anseur-el-Louza, beautifully situated in a green valley enclosed by high wooded hills, Selim Mustapha gave the order to halt for the night. On entering the large walled-in quadrangle, the Arab was surprised to find inside his old friend Al-Mansour, who had crossed the wild region of the Djendel, and was here on his way through Teniet-el-Hâad to the Plain of Sersou.

Abou Hassan was much pleased at meeting this powerful chieftain, whom he had long known by reputation during his visits to Algiers.

"You have done well," said he to Selim Mustapha, "in inducing your friend to join. His presence in our ranks will be a tower of might, and will strengthen many feeble knees and faint hearts."

"Alas! he was feeble-kneed and faint-hearted himself," Selim Mustapha replied, "until he found what an indomitable spirit animates our valiant tribes. Then his patriotic enthusiasm responded with noble fervour, and he resolved to throw himself, heart and soul, into the gallant struggle for the liberation of his native land."

"He acted with honour and prudence," observed the Kaïd. "A man has no claim to respect who rushes inconsiderately into an undertaking, without due deliberation, and afterwards seeks, through cowardice or vacillation, to retrace his steps. Before embarking in deeds of daring like ours, much anxious thought and consideration are requisite."

"This is the truth," Selim Mustapha replied. "We are bound to admire and applaud our friend's hesitation, since it has ended by his becoming one of our most enthusiastic supporters."

"Is not such the fact?" continued he, turning to Al-Mansour.

“Oh, friend of my youth! my head will plan for you; my heart will beat for you; my hand will fight for you. But before you say my heart and soul are in this struggle against the Giaour, hear me narrate a tale of the East.”

He then related the following anecdote, having seated himself on a carpet beside his friends.

“In olden times, far away in the lands of the East, existed a republic, whose laws were framed by Nandiskar, a wise and powerful legislator, but blind of an eye. He assembled the elders of the people and made them swear, on behalf of the State, that no alteration should ever be made in his enactments. Nantchow was his sole opponent, but Nandiskar managed matters so dexterously that he maintained his authority over the assembly, and all were unanimous in silencing his adversary. The latter, finding himself unable to convince his countrymen by his speeches, approached Nandiskar, exclaiming, ‘You desire your laws to be strictly observed, and the people consent. I demand to be punished according to your code.’ So saying he struck out, with a blow of his fist, the eye that remained to Nandiskar, one of whose laws enacted that whoever puts out the eye of another must lose one himself. ‘You have now learned,’ continued Nantchow, addressing his rival, ‘how defective is your law. You make it legal

for me to bring on you this great calamity, and it costs me but an eye to deprive you entirely of sight.' Nandiskar answered: 'Far from seeking revenge by imitating your wanton cruelty, I feel grateful for the lesson you have taught me. By destroying the eyes of my body you have opened the eyes of my mind, and reproved me for being arrogant and vain-glorious. Sage elders,' he continued, addressing the Assembly, 'be not ashamed to acknowledge with me that we have all been in error by enacting the part of lawgivers without sufficiently considering the consequences our conduct might entail. Our passions are a part of us. They are a great part of our nature, ever prompting us to do that which is wrong. But our reason is a greater part of our nature, and is given us to govern and control our passions. If we refuse to hearken to the still small voice of reason, that would lead us into the paths of honour and virtue, our will becomes our law, our lusts gain strength which we afterwards vainly strive to oppose, and wrong becomes so firmly rooted within as to defy all endeavours to undo its baneful influence. A day, an hour, under the guidance and discipline of reason is more precious than a long life spent in the degrading shackles of passion and appetite. If then happiness be the object you cherish, use your reason and curb your natural desires, remember-

ing how happy are the blest above who rest in everlasting peace of mind, free from all taint of sin, and finding the height of all their heaven to be purity and virtue.' ”

“And, pray, in what does this narrative apply to me?” inquired Selim Mustapha, somewhat angrily, of Al-Mansour. “I am no lawgiver, nor do I care to be.”

“It applies thus,” answered his friend. “Although you aim not to be a legislator, you aim to be a ruler. From this parable, then, learn the words of wisdom. Learn to dread ambition, arrogance, vain glory, and ignorance : learn to shun enterprises, the consequences of which you can neither foresee nor control. I have spoken.”

“And spoken to some purpose,” whispered Abou Hassan to Selim Mustapha. “If all your adherents join in this half-hearted spirit, our cause is hopeless.”

“He cannot be reckoned half-hearted,” replied the other. “Undoubtedly he differs from us as to the prudence of attacking at the present moment ; but now that he has surrendered his opinions, and bowed to the loudly proclaimed will of the majority, he will render unflinching service, and acquit himself like a man.”

These confidential whisperings greatly roused the wrath of Al-Mansour, who saw that he was suspected, and that his motives were misunderstood. Again he resorted to the unworthy

expedient of venting his spleen upon his friend by casting a slur upon his daughter's reputation.

"I am overjoyed, my oldest and best friend," he exclaimed, with feigned interest, "to perceive that you have brought your child away from the hands of the Giaours. That swoon at your house the girl satisfactorily explained, but it is well, oh, son of Ben-Eutemi, to remove her far from the breath of scandal and the paths of temptation!"

The expression of anguish that passed over the father's features brought delight to the vengeful soul of Al-Mansour, who furtively smiled at his friend's confusion.

To fill up the measure of Selim Mustapha's mortification, Abou Hassan joined in his mental torturings, and expatiated largely on the girl's singular behaviour the morning of the wreck at Chenoua.

"The moment that Christian appeared on the vessel's deck," exclaimed the Kaïd, "Azzahra became an altered woman, flinging herself in front of our marksmen, and risking her own life to save that of the cursed European dog."

In reply to these cruel taunts, the sorrowing parent opened not his lips, knowing at heart that these two men had rightly judged.

"Moreover, when your child fell down the rocks into the sea," continued Abou Hassan, "did you not observe how, without a moment's

hesitation, the Giaour flung himself off the yacht, to save her, into the boiling surf?"

"Off a yacht, said you?" exclaimed Al-Mansour in surprise. "Then is he the same that caused Azzahra to swoon at your feast? for I hear that he is often seen to go out cruising on one of the yachts in the harbour."

"From my heart I pity you," Abou Hassan said, with patronising sympathy.

"So do I," meekly echoed Al-Mansour. "Better far have perished in the waves of the Chenoua, than become the paramour of an infidel hound!"

Ungovernable passion would have seized on Selim Mustapha, had he not inwardly concurred in these sentiments. As it was, he simply showed his disapproval of their remarks, and stopped the conversation.

"My daughter knows her duty too well, she entertains too deep regard and love for her father, to become the paramour of any man," he proudly remarked. "I pray you let this cease."

Azzahra and Zorah now tripped merrily in, and Selim Mustapha tenderly embraced his daughter, to testify before his companions that in her truthfulness and honour he had full confidence, and that towards her he had harboured no resentment.

When Abou Hassan and his child-bride were

alone, he confidentially told her, as a source of great amusement, the secret of Azzahra being strongly suspected of having an infidel lover.

After expressing intense horror at thinking of a Christian in the light of a lover, or even looking at such a wicked wretch, the silly and fickle Zorah shamefully betrayed her friend, telling how these suspicions were but too well founded, and how Azzahra and this Christian loved each other to distraction.

"But you must not let Azzahra's father know, or he would kill her," pleaded the shallow-minded child, terrified at what she had done.

"He would kill me for telling him, which I consider much more serious," answered her husband. "Let your mind be at rest, Zorah: I am not the one to repeat what is told in confidence by a woman."

Passing along through a dense growth of juniper, ilex, lentisk, myrtle, thuya, arbor vitæ, yew and wild olive, which stretched away as far as the eye could reach, over valleys and hills, interspersed, here and there, with patches of pasture-land, on which flocks of sheep were feeding, they came to a saline stream, which runs into the Oued Louza. These saline rivers form incrustations along their banks, which often assume fantastic forms, attaining to as much as a foot in thickness.

Zorah and Azzahra greatly admired the beauty

of these crystalline deposits, sparkling like diamonds in the sun, and were likewise much pleased at seeing the tameness of the partridges and plovers, which ran fearlessly about on the roadside, at the edge of the *broussaille*. The blue thrushes, too, that flew close before them for long distances, from tree to tree, amused them no little.

When the convoy reached the oleander-fringed banks of the Oued Rerga, on the outskirts of Teniet-el-Hâad, they paused to consult as to how they should best endeavour to make certain of passing safely by this, the last of their dangers and difficulties.

Selim Mustapha told of his having seen, when travelling once in winter through the forest of cedars on the snowy mountain above the town, several deserted wooden huts, close to the warm ferruginous springs, which the invalids occupied in summer who resorted thither to drink the mineral waters.

"Why not seek the shelter of these sheds?" he said, in continuation. "The forest is not more than three miles distant, and there, concealed and sheltered by the huge trees, we can pass the night in comparative comfort, sleeping on our carpet rugs, well beyond the reach of prying, impertinent officials."

"And is not the plain of Sersou, whither we are bound, close at hand?" said Al-Mansour.

"I remember when passing along the wild desert tract, I saw the old cedar-trees in the distance."

"Just at the other side of the mountain," Selim Mustapha replied. "When we mount to the top of the forest, provided the snow be not too deep to get through, we shall see the Sersou plains beneath our feet."

The advantages of this plan were so apparent that it met with general approval, and Kredoudja was sent alone into the town on foot to make the necessary purchases of provisions. To Zorah, however, the disappointment was great at having to pass by Teniet-el-Hâad without stopping on a visit at the beautiful residence of the Agha, who was related to Abou Hassan, and whose wives she had often longed to meet. Besides, both here and at Milianah, she hoped to have had an opportunity of gazing at the French officers, as they sauntered about in their handsome uniforms—apparitions whom in her heart she never ceased to admire and adore.

To atone for her vexation at being forced to keep aloof from his relations, the Kaïd lovingly pressed the beautiful favourite to his breast, little surmising the desire of the silly child to look with pleasure on the hated enemies of his country whom he was going to fight in battle.

When coming out of the town, laden with eatables she had bought, Kredoudja was near being

detained on suspicion by a *sergent de ville*, who had formerly been stationed in Algiers, and who at once fancied he recognised her.

"I know you," he said, stopping her on chance. "You used to be the constant attendant of Selim Mustapha's daughter in Algiers."

Kredoudja was dreadfully alarmed, but she retained her presence of mind, declaring that she was a resident of Milianah, and had never gone to Algiers in her life. The police agent scrutinisingly surveyed her, but her unconcerned manner assured him that he was mistaken as to her identity.

"For whom, then, are the provisions you carry?" he asked, examining her stores of food.

"For my friends," she replied, with well-assumed artlessness, "who are encamped outside the town beside the Oued Rerga."

Had he been a free man he would have accompanied her, to test the truth of her story; but he luckily chanced to have an appointment with a fair *cuisinière* at the time—for even in the wilds of Africa policemen make cupboard-love—and so it came to pass that he allowed Kredoudja to go her way, as she had sufficiently satisfied him that his suspicions were groundless.

Little he suspected that one was in his grasp for whom a large reward was offered, in connection with the supposed murder of Jacquard, the French spy.

Rising *au point du jour*, the fugitives climbed rapidly up the mountain, and when they reached the forest of huge dome-shaped trees, similar in every respect, except the smell of the timber, to the cedars of Lebanon, they found themselves on the back of a large dorsal ridge, where a group of monarchs of the forest cast their sombre reflections on a deep pool of bright pellucid water. Underneath the boughs of these venerable patriarchs they could see on the one side the vast plain of the Sersou, extending as far as Chellala, seventy miles away, and in the opposite direction the valley of the Chelif, across which they had journeyed on their way from Milianah.

The eyes of the men were so habituated to discern distant objects, that they easily perceived the white houses of Chellala, at the foot of the Djebel Magrouat, which appeared like small specks, as they glistened in the sunlight; but Azzahra and Zorah were long ere they were able to distinguish these infinitesimally small objects. All around grew quantities of wild asparagus, which Kredoudja carefully gathered and put in the panniers of her mule, to prepare for food at the next halting-place.

After wearisome wanderings over the Sersou plains, the band of conspirators were at last gathered together, forming a goodly muster that gladdened the heart of Selim Mustapha.

Here the chieftains found their war-horses

awaiting them, richly caparisoned with the djellali horse-housings manufactured by native women in Laghouat, and made of filali, or imitation Morocco leather, whose red colour is produced by dyeing with the powerfully astringent inner rind of the wild pomegranate.

The blinkers, worn solely for show—for they did not reach so far forward as the horse's eyes—were laden with massive bullion; the curb-rings and huge bits were plated with silver; and the bridles were of gold-embroidered leather, strung close to the rider's hands with amulets, medallions, and rich silver ornaments. The saddles recalled to mind, by their splendour, the days of chivalry and tournament. The arched back, of red Morocco leather, stretched over a heavy wooden framework, was studded with golden bullion, worked in grotesque unmeaning devices, while the high peak in front was likewise wrought in gold. Precious metals encrusted thickly the stirrup leathers, and the immense slipper-like stirrups were encased, rather than plated, with silver. The part of the horse's body not concealed by the saddle was covered, to below the haunches, with satin clothing, weighted by heavy bullion fringe, till the proud animal was almost buried beneath his costly trappings.

At these magnificently caparisoned steeds Azzahra and Zorah were lost in admiration,

when they were told to select for their own use any two they preferred. Azzahra accordingly chose a splendid young light chestnut, with flowing flaxen mane and tail, for her charger; Zorah taking a grey, whose sweeping tail was dyed crimson with henna.

Selim Mustapha told the young women they must not expect their chargers to be thus gaily equipped every day—this showy saddlery being reserved for special occasions, such as their assemblage that day to commence the campaign which would free their native land from the yoke of the stranger. Then leaping on his favourite black war-horse, he led the way to the place of encampment.

“I feel a genuine child of the desert now,” proudly exclaimed Azzahra, as she mounted her prancing chestnut. “Oh, Zorah! do you not envy Cahina, the great queen of the Aouress, who led her Berber warriors to battle against the invading hosts of her enemies?”

“Would I were even the humble Arab heroine,” answered Zorah, enthusiasm lighting up her flashing eye, “who gallantly mounted the ramparts at Laghouat, cheering on her countrymen to defend their city against the French besiegers.”

CHAPTER V.

WITH THE OULED-MIMOUM.

THE Marquis de St. Bertrand had been kept so long in a state of expectation at Oran, awaiting the recovery of the invalid, and had been detained so long at Tlemcen afterwards, that he felt overjoyed as the time at length approached when he was to realise his visions of blissful delights.

Nero slaughtering with his club in the amphitheatre the unarmed and defenceless sham opponents compelled to stand up against him, or fiddling during the havoc and despair of burning Rome, was not more merciless than this polished smiling villain, as he lured on his confiding victim towards what, in her esteem, would be worse than death.

Under the guidance of St. Bertrand the party passed for a considerable distance along the mountain-side beneath El-Eubbad through vineyards and gardens of fruit trees, till they came to the upper end of the lovely valley of

El-Ourit, still studded beneath with the ruined suburban retreats of the former wealthy owners, represented now by two poor Arab families, whose wretched gourbis of reeds and mud desecrate the crumbling remains of former magnificence. Here they alighted to admire the vast amphitheatre, bounded by the lofty precipitous heights of the Djebel-Terni, down which the Oued Saf-Saf rushes from a height of three hundred feet, in a succession of boiling cascades, between huge boulder rocks and hanging islets covered with masses of trees and shrubs. The upper portion is an aggregation of small streams, each dashing in its own channel down the side of the immense semi-circular basin, until they all join half-way to the bottom, and form in succession two falls of great grandeur. The lower fall bounds down the face of a rock forty feet high, a fine group of trees standing on one side, and an ivy-mantled cliff on the other.

Long they stood upon the light iron bridge thrown over the Oued in front of this gigantic cascade, admiring the wild and beautiful scenery of the delicious valley which displays aloft such a mighty triumph of nature, and which teems below with the aloes, cactus, and fruit-bearing trees of the departed Moors,—nature on one side radiant in unadorned beauty and majesty; on the opposite stamped with the lingering traces of how her charms were assisted and developed

by the fostering care of man, when wealth and refinement spread joyous smiles throughout the land.

After a prolonged and fatiguing journey through the wild, scrub-clad Tessala range, where semi-nomad natives were setting on fire the thick broussaille that grass might spring up in its stead, the travellers reached the village of Hadja-Roum, prettily situated on the banks of the Isser, close to the battle-field where Abd-el-Kader was defeated by the French under Marshal Bugeaud. Here, fording the river, they were received by the Khalifa of the Ouled-Mimoum, arrayed in his full-dress scarlet cloth burnous, on whose territories the *chasse* was to take place on the morrow and who was to be their host for the night. Springing from his gaily caparisoned horse, the great man hastened to salute St. Bertrand by first placing his open hand in that of the Frenchman, and then with the same hand touching his forehead and afterwards his lips.

The humble demeanour of the Khalifa, and the distant hauteur with which St. Bertrand received his homage, gave rise to disparaging comments, in which even Olinda was forced to join; but the hussar assured them, in explanation, that the assumption of condescending superiority over these wild semi-nomads was imperative as a matter of principle and policy.

The fawning submissive creature before them, continued he, was one of the worst disposed in the country, and would be one of the first to join in rebellion, should a convenient opportunity arise.

In conclusion the Marquis requested his friends to treat this Arab Chief with the same dignified reserve. Any friendliness of manner, through mistaken good-nature, any permission to the fellow to assume a tone of equality, would, he assured them, prove highly mischievous. The ignorant illiterate savage would be carried away with exaggerated ideas of his self-importance, and would become simply unbearable. "He is bound to receive us and let us enjoy his hospitality," he observed in English, surveying the Khalifa with an air of authority. "He is merely discharging a duty and receiving an honour. Why then return thanks? or why treat a dependant as though he were an equal?"

"Heard you that?" whispered the American to Edwardes. "As I told you, the Kaïd and his Khalifa are ordered and compelled to provide this entertainment, which will not cost the Marquis one shilling. What did he mean then by telling Miss Somerton that he was expending large sums on the expedition? Our first impressions at Oran were just. These contradictions awake my suspicions, and please me not."

"There does seem some hidden mystery,"

Edwardes replied, "which I am unable to fathom. Still what motive could impel him to duplicity? Did he harbour sinister designs, they would be futile in the presence of us all."

"Be not over-confident," retorted Johnson. "Remember our friends, the Ouled-Mimoum, are slaves to do his bidding, and they know not what honour and pity mean."

"Rightly spoken," exclaimed the other thoughtfully. "The Marquis's passion for our fair friend seems so intense, and she, alas! so encourages his attentions, that he might yield to the temptation of finding her in his power amid these lonely solitudes."

"How about planning to get her into his power in these lonely solitudes?" his friend answered.

To Edwardes this presented a new view of the case; but he refused to believe that the gallant officer would stoop to such vile premeditated villainy. At the same time he acknowledged the prudence of adopting due precautions. He and Johnson therefore determined that on the morrow she should not be left for a moment without one or other at her side.

The Khalifa now remounted his bright bay war-steed, and led the way through inhospitable tracts of wilderness, to his encampment on the banks of the Isser. Here they found the Kaïd's war-tent prepared for their reception—an im-

mense marquee of canvas lined with woollen stuff striped in red and white. As a protection from the evil eye and from Djins, a red open hand with a crescent on the second finger was painted in many parts around the interior of the tent, which was divided for the occasion into two compartments, one to serve as a *salle à manger* and as a sleeping-room for the gentlemen, the other being set apart for the use of the ladies. Large mats of wool, manufactured by the Kabyles of the Atlas, were spread upon the grass inside, and these, together with long Persian rugs stuffed at one end to serve as pillows at night, were the sole articles of furniture the marquee contained.

By particular desire, the ladies, escorted by the Khalifa, proceeded to visit his women in an adjacent marquee, who were dressed out for the reception in coarse muslin and tawdry finery; but he only acknowledged the elder one to be his wife, in deference to European prejudices, calling the younger ones his daughters. Pointing to his old wife, he exclaimed in French that she was a horrid creature, and that he hated her; but the poor woman, knowing only Arabic, imagined the gay deceiver was singing her praises, and tittered with joy.

Miss Thornton was profoundly scandalised at the inquisitive interrogatories and the rude attempts at ocular investigation made by the Arab

women on her person as to the cause of European ladies not rearing their own offspring, a peculiarity they concluded must proceed from physical incompatibility. Olinda was likewise much shocked at her aunt and herself being thus ruthlessly attacked, and turned away in righteous anger, but the mischievous Geraldine laughed heartily at her aunt's discomfiture, to the great annoyance of her more prudish cousin. Outside the tent Raoul was in waiting to conduct his guests to where a sheep was being roasted whole for their repast.

"You never saw primitive cookery such as this," he said, smiling, as he pointed out the *chef* engaged in his culinary preparations, "but you will find the result all that can be desired."

In a hole dug in the ground a fire of ilex-wood logs blazed, over which the animal, whole in its skin after the wool had been plucked off, was fixed on a large wooden spit, one end of which revolved in a block of timber, secured to an earthen bank beside the fire, the other extremity being turned slowly round with a windlass-like handle by the *chef de cuisine*.

At dinner-time the party were honoured by being waited upon by the brother of the Khalifa; but the great man himself did not presume to appear at his own repast, or seat himself among his guests, with whom he well knew he would be unwelcome.

This enforced exclusion of their host surprised the company, and, Edwardes said, reminded him of an anecdote about Beau Brummel and a *nouveau riche* whose ambition was to entertain the Prince Regent at dinner. Brummel undertook to secure the Prince as well as to invite the guests who were to meet him, and in due course laid before his protégé a list of the company.

“Very gratifying indeed! very complimentary!” exclaimed the *parvenu*, as he surveyed in delight the array of titled and distinguished names, “but you have forgotten to keep a place for me at table.”

“Surely you cannot expect to be admitted to our company the first time we dine in your house?” demanded the other, apparently lost in astonishment at the unreasonableness of such a proposal. “My dear sir, that would be impossible; but if you treat us well, give us a good dinner and good wine, and if we enjoy our evening, we may take you into favourable consideration next time.”

Inevitable kouskoussou commenced the repast, followed by an excellent dish composed of fowl, eggs, and onions, highly seasoned with chilis. Now appeared the sheep they had watched roasting, from the neck of which the Khalifa’s brother with his fingers tore small pieces and presented them in a bowl to the knifeless and forkless recipients. Kabobs—small pieces of

mutton wrapped in slender skin cases and roasted on a long wooden skewer—were next served, and then stewed fowl. Thick flat cakes did duty for bread, but no vegetable of any kind was produced, not even the universal potato, for the Arabs cultivate no crop save millet and barley. Thin unbaked cakes eaten with honey concluded the feast, which all the partakers had highly relished after their long drive from Tlemcen and their subsequent ride over the wild wastes of the Tessala.

While finishing their *bordeaux*—the origin of whose English name “claret” seems lost in the mists of obscurity—the Khalifa entered the tent, and, by express invitation from St. Bertrand, seated himself on the ground amid his guests, with a meek and thankful expression.

The humiliation inflicted on this proud spirit pained Olinda, and she begged permission to thank him for his hospitable entertainment ; but this St. Bertrand imperatively forbade.

“The only way to keep these fellows in order,” he replied, “is to bully them well, and show them they are held in no estimation.”

Wilton inadvertently added to the mortification of the Khalifa by declining to partake of dates he was offering with his own hand, which St. Bertrand afterwards told Henry was considered a deep affront by the natives. The latter felt considerable annoyance at not being

apprised of this, that he might have retrieved his error.

“Far better not,” replied the hussar. “He respects you all the more for snubbing him.”

“That may be,” added Wilton rather bitterly, for this offensive domineering spirit gave him umbrage, “but I choose to respect myself. I approve not of snubbing those who use every endeavour to please. To me such conduct appears inexcusable.”

To this Raoul made no reply, though colouring deeply with anger at receiving such a severe rebuff. He quietly took revenge by turning his back on Wilton and occupying Olinda in conversation, who gladly embraced the opportunity after the marked way he had kept aloof of late. This the Frenchman believed the most deadly dagger he could plunge into the breast of the man he suspected of claiming to be a rival, little suspecting for whom Henry’s heart was beating.

Saluting his guests with profound respect, though without even so much as an intimation that his hospitable entertainment had met with approval, the Khalifa now withdrew. But soon he returned, an air of mystery and excitement pervading his swarthy features.

“Four horsemen,” he cautiously whispered, “have come into camp to-night who are strangers to our tribe. They call themselves Spahis, but

this is false. Though pretending to be natives and dressed like us, our men think they are French, with the exception perhaps of one who converses in Arabic sufficiently to procure all they require. Communication with my adherents they scrupulously avoid, maintaining an air of distant sullen reserve that fills me with alarm."

As the Khalifa proceeded St. Bertrand became agitated and turned deadly pale.

"Why call you these men French?" he asked, abruptly turning to his host. "Why may they not be Spahis, as they represent, and on duty?"

"They are no Spahis, *mon Capitaine*," meekly replied the Chief. "Is it likely that Spahis would come into camp without reporting their presence to you?"

"How know they I am here?" quickly asked the officer, thinking he had made a good point.

"Well they know," the other answered. "They have been told, but gave no heed."

Raoul folded his arms, and sat with knitted brows wrapped in gloomy meditation.

"These strangers have come with evil intent," the Khalifa recommenced, addressing his superior. "Unhappy man that I am! I shall be held responsible for the safety of you and your friends, yet I know not what these sons of Satan, the pelted with stones, may attempt during the night."

"Your tribe can be but poor warriors," returned the Frenchman with a withering laugh of scorn, "when four possible enemies fill them with such terror."

After a pause he rose from his half recumbent position on the ground.

"I will go with you, Khalifa, to these men," he said. "I will find out who and what they are."

When the folding flap of the tent was looped together again after their exit, Edwardes called Henry and Johnson apart, to tell how uneasy he felt about this incident, most of all at the strange demeanour of their host, which seemed open to the gravest suspicion.

"Let us follow," he exclaimed on their expressing similar doubts. "We will overtake them, and see what takes place."

Olinda alone felt no apprehension, for she relied with implicit faith on the wisdom of St. Bertrand when he demanded what could four do against so many. But the terror of Miss Thornton was intense.

"Let not these wicked monsters take me away," she screamed as the gentlemen departed. "Better the jaws of death than the clutches of such fiends!"

"My dear Miss Thornton," Edwardes responded with suppressed laughter, "you must copy the nuns of San Pedro de las Puellas in

Barcelona, who cut off their noses to disfigure themselves and prevent the victorious Moors from leading them away captive to the harems of Granada. But somehow these virtuous ladies failed to perform the operation in a proper and satisfactory manner, so they were ruthlessly seized and dragged off in triumph by the victors."

"How awful to think of!" exclaimed the old lady with a shudder of horror.

"You would manage better than that," he added. "You would have no half-measures about your nose."

"I would not," she replied with warmth. "I would cut off the whole of my head sooner than surrender to the barbarians."

"I knew it," he said as he passed out. "All honour to such noble sentiments."

When he and his companions came up with their host, they found him and the Khalifa in close conversation with the four new-comers.

"There has been a great scare about nothing," St. Bertrand said in his off-hand and slightly overbearing manner. "These are genuine Spahis, it turns out after all, *en route* for Sidi-Ben-Abbes, who are come to claim the Khalifa's hospitality. Not likely that any harbouring treachery would assume such a disguise, or would come into camp to court certain detection and exposure."

And he turned to the Arab, appealing for corroboration. But the latter held his peace.

"Are you not convinced yet that these soldiers are on duty?" sharply demanded Raoul, for he was angry at the marked silence of the Khalifa, "and that they would protect sooner than molest us?"

"You are my master and I am your servant," was the humble though evasive reply. "Unto me your words are law."

While their host conversed apart with one of the strangers, Edwardes seized the opportunity to inquire of the Khalifa whether he retained his suspicions as to their not being Spahis.

"Spahis? how can they be native troopers," he whispered tremblingly, lest he should be detected by his superior, "when they understand not our language?"

"You believe, then, they are French, wearing the costume from sinister motives?" asked Edwardes, much perplexed.

"Not a doubt they are," the other replied, still nervously scanning his officer. "But fear not, a strong guard shall keep watch through the night outside your tent door."

"Your Captain seems on an intimate footing with these horsemen," observed Edwardes, pointing to where Raoul and one of them were in deep consultation. "See how confidentially they converse."

"The Capitaine is too good-natured and too easily imposed upon," answered the native, mysteriously placing his finger on his lips to enjoin silence and secrecy.

Though St. Bertrand stood between him and the mock Spahi, with his back turned, Edwardes could perceive by the movement of his arm that he was grasping the hand of the stranger. At parting, he distinctly heard Raoul pronounce the words, "Be firm."

"Fear not," was the reply.

In considerable alarm, Edwardes confided to his compatriots what he had seen and heard, what the Khalifa had whispered in confidence, and what St. Bertrand had said to the Spahi.

They, likewise, were considerably disconcerted at the mysterious and inexplicable conduct of their host; but, remembering they were the guests of the Frenchman, they felt helpless in his hands. What steps could they take? Whither could they fly for safety through wild inhospitable regions, with none to guide, and enshrouded in darkness? Might they not, perchance, rush into the very perils they sought to escape?

Weighing these considerations, they decided to observe masterly inactivity until their visit was concluded, betraying no suspicion, causing no offence. As Azzahra had resolved to act towards Selim Mustapha, so they resolved to act towards St. Bertrand. They would dissemble, and wait.

But they would watch without ceasing, keeping guard within the tent door by turns, until the light of the morning should appear.

Meekly and submissively the Khalifa again entered the marquee, but Raoul noticed him not, enraged at the refusal of the Arab to endorse his statements about the stranger cavaliers.

Without appearing aware of the marked rebuff, the Khalifa told how he had been deputed by his women to request that the ladies and gentlemen would honour his poor tent with their presence. His women would dance before them, accompanied by his musicians, and his youngest wife would recite an eastern tale and sing some native airs.

"That will be delightful," exclaimed Olinda. "A genuine Arabian Nights' Entertainment."

"She is very lovely," he added, "and I am very proud of her, she sings so beautifully."

"You are a bad, wicked man," exclaimed Alice Thornton. "You told us you had but one wife, and that the young women we saw were your daughters. Now it turns out you have ever so many wives."

"The lady has you there, stranger," said Johnson, with a knowing wink at the great man, "and in my opinion you ought to receive us with your wives unveiled, as a trifling atonement for such base misrepresentation."

"Alas! I but follow the custom of my country,"

replied the Arab with a shrug. "None but myself may look on them uncovered."

"Wrong principle, depend upon it," the American continued. "Monopolies are bad, and should be put down by the strong arm of the law—in fact, as you would say, by *force majeure*."

This badinage on the sacred subject of the women in his household highly displeased the Khalifa, but he passed no comment, servilely leading the way to where his tent was pitched.

"You are shocked," continued Johnson, while escorting Miss Thornton, "that our friend here should have such a lot of wives. But what is he in comparison with the ancient and modern potentates of Mahometan lands? Take for example the Sultan of Morocco, Jussuf-Tefsin, who conquered the whole of Moorish Spain, dethroning the petty princes who reigned in that country. This merry monarch lived up to his privileges, possessing no less than a thousand wives, and having from fifteen to twenty children born to him in one day."

"What shocked me so much," the old lady replied, unheeding this wholesale polygamy, "was his descending to such abominable falsehood and dissimulation. Why could not the man honestly admit that the young women were married to him, instead of trying to pass them off as his daughters?"

After coffee was handed round by the brother

of the Khalifa, the dismal monotonous drone of flageolet, lute, and tom-tom commenced, and the veiled beauties of the harem rose up to dance from their Persian rugs spread out on the grassy floor of the tent.

Edwardes and the American never having seen these native Terpsichorean performances, visions arose before their expectant eyes of the swimming whirl, the light fantastic and the giddy maze of European ballet or ball-room. But Olinda and her relations, while at Granada, had engaged a band of gipsies, under command of their "captain" or "king," to perform these same dances handed down from the remotest antiquity, and they thus came prepared for what was in store.

Each *danseuse*, as she commenced her solitary evolutions, twirled a long kerchief of gauze into the shape of a festoon which she held before her with both hands, one hand low down and the other above her head. Then in time with the lugubrious strains of the musicians she swayed her body about and turned herself round in artistic and picturesque attitudes, keeping up a constant elastic motion of her feet, but never stirring them from the same spot.

All took part in succession, beginning at the eldest down to the youngest, and seemed to enter with great zest into the spirit of the entertainment. The younger wives displayed considerable grace and æsthetic feeling, but the con-

torted exertions of some who exhibited a large amount of embonpoint were the reverse of fascinating. For what can be more supremely ridiculous than the dancing of an obese woman?

"Is that all? Why I call that 'attitudinising,'" exclaimed Johnson, much disappointed. "I never should have known it was dancing, unless I had been told."

"The gipsies of Granada," Wilton replied, "are far superior, for they give one some little variety. The figure they go through on taking leave at the conclusion of the performance, when the girls file past in a floating gliding motion, throwing one arm gently round each gentleman's neck as they pass, is exceedingly pretty and graceful."

"You should be ashamed to mention the subject," said Olinda, playfully, "for you made yourself most objectionable by the way you reciprocated their delicate attentions, and put your arm round their slender waists."

"What would you have?" he replied, laughing. "It was perfectly orthodox to pay them this compliment. Had I failed in my duty, they would have felt offended, and have considered me as little better than a heathen."

"I know that," Olinda replied, with a slight tinge of sadness in her voice, "but it pained me to see you show favour to those women."

"Why so?" he asked sorrowfully. "What

can it matter to you how I act, speak, or think ? ”

“ Very much,” she answered, with a soft smile. “ Remember I am your cousin, and must look after your interests.”

“ And remember I am your cousin, and must look after your interests,” he whispered. “ Get clear of this *roué* marquis, Olinda. Compromise yourself with him no longer. He is a dangerous, unprincipled man.”

Miriem, the lately married bride, and the consequent favourite of the Khalifa, was now called upon by her lord ; but the saucy beauty openly rebelled, declaring it was impossible she could recite or sing while wearing the detested stifling yashmak. After a long but fruitless parley, the doating husband surrendered at discretion, and in a moment Miriëm’s pretty, sprightly face was revealed to the gaze of the admiring audience. Such a triumph for the haughty Miriëm as to be the sole enjoyer of this prized immunity could not possibly be tolerated by her seniors, and simultaneously every veil was flung away, to the dismay and shame of the discomfited Khalifa.

“ Serve him right,” exclaimed the Yankee. “ The churl might just as well have allowed this at first, out of compliment to us.”

Exultant and smiling at her victory, Miriëm recited the tale of “ The Impenitent Parent,”

singing the airs to a funereal cadence struck up by the orchestra.

THE IMPENITENT PARENT.

Al-Raschid boldly scaled the dizzy steep
Beneath a lonely, ivy-mantled keep
Frowning on high above a rock-bound glen,
Far from the city or the haunts of men.
A prisoner here was Zina doomed to pine,
Beauteous to gaze on, gentle, good, divine.
Here was she watched with stern paternal care,
Protected here from every toil and snare.
“ These beetling cliffs defy the foot of man,”
The hardened father vauntingly began.
“ Here shall no lover ever venture near,
“ To pour soft flattery into Zina’s ear.”
Vain was the hope. Alas ! he little guessed
What daring glows within the lover’s breast.
With caution climbing slowly round the tower,
Al-Raschid stood beneath his Zina’s bower.
Aloft, before his fond enraptured sight
He saw the loved one by the pale moonlight,
And in a flood of amorous emotion
Poured forth his fervid accents of devotion.

SERENADE OF THE OUTRAGED LOVER.

I.

Ever dearest Zina !
Oh ! can I e’er forget
The raptures of the moment
When first we fondly met ?
The thrill of wild delight
That coursed through every vein ?
The maddening play of love
That burned my throbbing brain ?
Fly, love ! Fly, love,
And soothe my tortured heart !
Fly, love ! Fly, love,
Where we shall never part !

II.

The memory of that moment
 Will never fade away.
 The tender passion kindled
 Will never know decay.
 Each blissful day I prize thee,
 My treasure, more and more.
 I'll worship thee—adore thee—
 Till life's bright dream is o'er.
 Fly, love ! Fly, love,
 And soothe my tortured heart !
 Fly, love ! Fly, love,
 Where we shall never part !

When in the harem Zina heard above
 The wild 'outpourings of Al-Raschid's love—
 Heard him beseech her on some happy shore
 To dwell in joy and peace for evermore—
 Far, far away, to own his loving heart,
 Where none should trouble, none should ever part—
 Enraptured with delight, with bliss elate,
 She gave the solemn pledge that sealed her fate.

RESPONSE OF THE DOOMED.

I.

Lead on, beloved Al-Raschid !
 Zina will follow thee,
 Though it be over mountains,
 Or over the raging sea.
 No toil, no care, no danger
 Can sever hearts that love.
 The flame that burns within us
 Is blessed of Heaven above.
 Fly, love ! Fly, love !
 I'll soothe thy troubled heart.
 Fly, love ! Fly, love,
 Where we shall never part !

II.

Joined thus in fond affection,
How blessed will be our life !
Away from care and sorrow,
Away from angry strife.
Dearest, I madly love thee ;
In solitude I pine
To hail the blissful moment
Will make me ever thine.
Fly, love ! Fly, love !
I'll soothe thy troubled heart.
Fly, love ! Fly, love,
Where we shall never part !

But how fly from her prison ? how elope ?
Buoyed up with ecstasy, and love, and hope,
The fond Al-Raschid soon devised a way
To win his bride, and bear her safe away.
While to her thrilling ears he told his scheme,
Her father, guided by the moonlight beam,
Mounted the precipice and stole to where
The youth breathed vows of passion to the fair.
Drawing his scimitar, with one dread sweep
He felled his victim on the slippery steep.
Al-Raschid sprang in air, and with a yell
Down in the yawning chasm headlong fell.
Goaded to madness by her parent's laughter,
The maiden bounded from her window after.
But in her airy transit, as she sped,
She chanced to light upon her father's head.
Him she bore with her deep into the glen,
Where father, daughter, lover, ne'er were seen again.

Mirïem's contribution was greeted with warm applause, notwithstanding the monotonous dull music of the songs, for her elocution was highly spirited, and her charming fresh features warmed up with the glow of genius and artistic animation, as she proceeded with her narration.

The pride and delight of the happy Benedict were unbounded. Not so, however, with his remaining better halves—or, more strictly speaking perhaps, the remaining portions of his better half, the whole number being considered rolled up, as it were, into one, to constitute a fitting counterpoise for, and ruler over their polygamist lord, whom they owned in common. Jealousy, disappointment, rage, and hate swelled their heaving bosoms, as they beheld their insolent supplanter receive the praise and homage of the host and of his European visitors. But fear compelled them to stifle their vindictive passions, and even, with false smiles, to award praise to their successful rival.

Conspicuous in admiration of the fair singer was St. Bertrand, who appeared deeply smitten with the grace and loveliness of the gifted Mirïem. But this was only a snare laid, and it proved successful, to discover the feelings of Olinda towards himself. As he anticipated, the intended victim showed manifest symptoms of jealous annoyance, as she beheld his eyes steadily fixed on the beautiful Arabian.

“That is well,” he inwardly muttered, as he stole a furtive glance at the unsuspecting Olinda. “Jealousy betokens love. And where love abounds, all things are possible.”

The Khalifa now brought forward his brother, whom he pronounced an accomplished Rami,

and who recited many tales and poetical pieces that were highly appreciated: amongst others, "Loving in vain."

LOVING IN VAIN.

My love was born of high degree,
Powerful, wealthy, happy, free.
Rich plains—a principality—
Were ruled by her authority.
I saw her priceless jewels blaze,
Shedding afar their dazzling rays.
I saw the vestures that she wore—
Rare fabrics from the Orient shore.
I saw her, blissful and elate,
Surrounded by proud regal state,
And felt that one so great as she
Would never deign to smile on me.
My sorrowing heart confessed with pain
That I must love and sigh in vain.
Stretched on a soft and mossy bank,
Reclining as in sleep she sank,
My raptured eyes beheld my love,
While sad I wandered through the grove.
A heavenly smile played o'er her cheek,
And her lips moved, as though to speak.
Softly and silently I crept
Close where the blessed vision slept,
To hearken to the words that came.
Joy! joy! she fondly breathed my name!
Glad thrills of bliss, like burning flame,
Flashed in wild courses through my frame.
No more my heart was torn with pain;
No more I felt I loved in vain.

Olinda, in reply to the Khalifa's inquiry, having owned that she was a musician, the company, including the ladies of the harem, requested her to favour them with a contribution towards the amusements of the evening.

Having obtained a promise from Edwardes that he would also join, she sang a pretty ballad composed by herself.

OH! DOST THOU EVER THINK OF ME?

I.

Oh! dost thou ever think of me
When thou art light and gay?
Or think how dreary are the hours
When thou art far away?
Poor woman's heart in sorrow breaks
When man turns cold away.
He is the idol of her soul,
The brightness of her day.
Man is the stay of woman's soul,
The brightness of her day.

II.

Leave me not, then. Kind pity feel
For one who loves so dear.
An earthly paradise is mine
Whilst thou, beloved, art near.
Oh! smile once more as in the days
When first we fondly met.
Give back thy generous heart, and then
We may be happy yet.
Give back thy generous heart, and then
We may be happy yet.

This ballad drew forth loud encomiums, especially from the unartistic portion of the Khalifa's household, who desired to demonstrate thereby how far superior they considered the strains of the European to those of the loathed Miriem. But little the favourite heeded,

though she clearly saw through this petty spite of her jealous rivals. Their anger only made her more confident in her own superiority and power.

With rare heedlessness and blind folly, Olinda, while she sang, often turned to Raoul with tender looks as she came to the most amorous passages—marked favours which filled his lover's heart with rapturous hope.

In accordance with his promise to Olinda, Edwardes then delighted the audience with the following manly spirit-stirring air.

TO THE FRONT! TO THE FRONT!

I.

To the front! To the front,
When the foemen draw near!
We will march to the front
With a soul-stirring cheer.
We will hurl the proud hosts
In the depths of the sea,
When they dare to set foot
On the land of the Free.
To the front! To the front,
Where the tumult of war
Is raging the fiercest,
Is echoing afar!
With our blades flashing bright,
And our banners on high,
Charging shoulder to shoulder,
We will conquer, or die!

To the front! To the front!
Wave the banners on high!
Charging shoulder to shoulder,
We will conquer, or die!

II.

To the front ! To the front !
See ! the foemen draw near.
Now, to strike for our freedom
And all we hold dear !
To the front ! To the front
With the brave-hearted band
Marching forth to the fray
For their dear native land !
Our nerves are of iron,
And our hearts are of oak ;
We would scorn to bow down
To the foreigner's yoke.
Bid the clarion resound !
Wave the banners on high !
Charging shoulder to shoulder,
We will conquer, or die !
To the front ! To the front !
Wave the banners on high !
Charging shoulder to shoulder,
We will conquer, or die !

Frederick and Geraldine now loudly clamoured for their aunt to furnish her quota to the vocal *séance*, and would listen to no refusal, though Olinda and Wilton energetically raised their voices against such unkindness towards the good old lady.

But Miss Thornton was not to be put down. She determined to sing, and she did sing—at least, to the best of her limited ability. For she was firmly impressed with the supposed excellence of her musical attainments, thinking that what she had lost in power of voice she had amply compensated for by soul and pathos.

THE TRANSFORMATION SCENE.

I.

Each lassie sighs to meet her lad.

When barely sweet sixteen,

Her budding hopes begin to long

For the transformation scene.

She chafes and flutters, like a bird

Longing to fly away,

Where she can find a bonnie lad,

And hail her wedding-day.

Though watch be kept with bar and bolt

From early morn to e'en,

Her thoughts are always sure to run

On the transformation scene.

II.

"The transformation scene!" she sighs,

"How blessed will be the day

When over the hills a lover comes

To bear me far away!

Over the hills and far away,

Down through the forest green;

Oh! how I long for the day to dawn

On the transformation scene!

"Though watch be kept with bar and bolt

From early morn to e'en,

My thoughts will ever surely run

On the transformation scene."

III.

And she will gain her end at last,

And find her lad, I ween;

What would life be without the joys

Of the transformation scene?

It soothes the brow oppressed with care,

It fills the heart with light;

It makes the changing scenes of life

Seem ever fair and bright.

Though watch be kept with bar and bolt
From early morn to e'en,
A maiden's thoughts will ever run
On the transformation scene.

"Quite right, Miss Thornton," ejaculated Johnson, joining in the mirth evoked by this amatory effusion. "Nothing like a good transformation scene, believe me. You would like well to go in for that, I know."

"Very much indeed," she faintly murmured in response. "It must be delightful."

Thanking the Khalifa for his hospitable reception, and for the pleasure he had afforded, much to the vexation of the haughty and domineering hussar, the Europeans took their departure.

When outside the tent, a figure in white haik and burnous emerged from the brushwood close at hand, and beckoned St. Bertrand away.

"What better opportunity need we ask than this?" whispered Auguste Pécoul, for he it was. "The tribe are gone to rest, the night is dark, the coppice is thick, and none are astir save the guard outside your marquee, who are too far away to pursue in time. Say but the word, and in a moment she shall be in the depths of this *broussaille*. At dawn one of my men will be in waiting with the horses at a rendezvous whither I and the other two will drag her."

"Too great a risk," Raoul answered, after

reflection. "You would assuredly fail, Auguste. Think you not her shrieks and cries for help would point out the way to her rescue? Think you not these English would dash madly forward to save her? Most certainly they would, and they would succeed too, guided by the sound of her voice. What could you do against the whole tribe of the Ouled-Mimoum, hounded on by her British relations and friends?"

"But can you not give the Khalifa a private hint to keep aloof?" demanded Auguste, reluctant to give up his project.

"And put myself in the scoundrel's power?" St. Bertrand replied. "That would be a silly trick. No; let us stick to our first plan, Auguste. During the hunt to-morrow, you must watch for your chance, when these English *gamins* are not at hand, and decoy her off quietly under some feigned pretence, far enough to let her wildest yells and screams be out of hearing. Then put spurs to horse, and away for the Desert."

Though so dark the night, Raoul's colloquy with the figure in white was noticed by Edwardes and the Yankee, and awakened afresh their gloomiest apprehensions.

As they returned to their marquee, stumbling in the dark over stumps and mounds, Wilton, Olinda, and Miss Thornton walked together.

"I must make a complaint about this absurd

cousin of mine, Aunt Alice," playfully exclaimed Olinda to her aunt. "He has been uttering the most infamous calumnies against my friend, the Marquis de St. Bertrand, calling him a *roué*, a dangerous unprincipled man, and one with whom I should compromise myself no longer. Are not those wicked libels?"

Miss Thornton hesitating to reply, her niece insisted that she should speak.

The worthy spinster, thus brought to bay, summoned up courage at last to open her mind to Olinda, and to tell, though with manifest trepidation, that with her the Marquis was no favourite.

"Rest assured, dear Olinda," she added nervously, "that Henry advises you well."

"You spiteful, deceitful, two-faced thing," returned her niece in jest. "Here you have been all this time looking on at this most ordinary and unsentimental friendship between the Marquis and myself without opening your lips in remonstrance, and now, all in a moment, you turn round and join in his abuse."

"Don't get angry, Olinda dear," the good woman pleaded. "Indeed I would have interfered long ago, but feared I should only cause annoyance and irritation. How I blame myself now for such culpable negligence."

"Oh, aunt, I am astonished. How can you tell such a story?" screamed Olinda, now in reality vexed with her aunt.

"She tells no story, Olinda," Henry interposed, "but speaks, alas! the words of truth and soberness. The same feeling has prompted me to silence hitherto, but I shall no longer consult my own ease and comfort by standing idly apart when I see you involved in threatening dangers."

"Could not I retort, Henry, in cruel bitter taunts?" she asked with dignified hauteur. "Well you know the weapon I could wield; but I abstain."

"Oh dear! oh dear! how crooked and entangled love affairs will get!" sorrowfully moaned Miss Thornton. "How unreasoning and perverse lovers will become! Here are four people, all of them in love, two of them good and two of them bad. Now I want to know why the two good cannot pair off together, and the two bad pair off together. Why cannot you two marry? and why cannot the Marquis and Azzahra marry?"

"But I deny altogether that Azzahra is bad," loudly vociferated Henry. "Contrariwise, she combines every perfection that can be found in woman."

"And I deny altogether that the Marquis de St. Bertrand is bad," echoed Olinda. "He is thoroughly good and amiable."

"You will find the difference some day, Olinda," he sadly added, "and will suffer for your blind confiding credulity."

"And so will you suffer some day for your insensate enthusiasm about that Arab," she rejoined somewhat bitterly; "a girl you yourself saw banded with plundering bloodthirsty criminals."

Before the ladies retired for the night behind their screen of carpets, Raoul prayed Olinda to repeat one of her poems which he so deeply admired.

"If you do not think the subject too grave after the merry evening we have passed," she smilingly responded, "I will recite a piece of sacred poetry I have recently composed. It soothes the mind to finish the day with thoughts of pure and holy things."

"Then you are religious, Mademoiselle?" he asked with a scared and perplexed look, for such a state of affairs seriously militated against his projected programme.

"Yes, I have been religiously brought up," she replied in singular simplicity, "and regard spiritual matters with deep interest."

"*Mille tonnerres*, here is a new rock ahead," inwardly muttered the Frenchman, dismayed at first by this fresh difficulty.

"Yet it may be for the best," he presently reasoned. "These *religieuses* are fools with no knowledge of life or mankind, who should be readily duped and made subservient."

"You are not as religious as you ought to be,

Marquis, I suspect," Olinda continued, looking at Raoul with an arch smile, and happily ignorant of his black diabolical thoughts.

"He is a devoted worshipper of Mars and Venus, I guess," interrupted the American.

"That is better than the wholesale worship of Mammon to which your countrymen are wholly given up," Raoul sarcastically replied, with a sardonic grin.

"But we are forgetting that you kindly said you would favour us with a recital, Miss Somerton," he added. "I hope you will remember to keep your promise."

"'Look up to God' is the title I have given to my verses," she said, as she commenced.

LOOK UP TO GOD.

I.

In every varied scene below,
Look up to whence all blessings flow.
Look to thy Father and thy friend,
And he His timely aid will send.
When peace, contentment, joy are thine,
Thy heart to thankfulness incline;
Remember whence each blessing flows;
Look up, and pay thy grateful vows.

II.

With wealth and honours at command,
When all succeeds thou hast in hand,
Forget not who hath filled thy cup,
In humble gratitude look up;
Or when, with bitter woe oppressed,
Thy spirit knows no peace nor rest,
Look up in prayer to God the wise,
And He a way will soon devise.

III.

When anguish and disease invade,
Frail mortal ! be not thou afraid ;
The God of mercy, love, and power
Will aid thee in the darkest hour.
When feeble life is ebbing fast,
And thou art gliding down at last
Within the precincts of the grave,
Look up to God, and He will save.

“Lovely,” enthusiastically ejaculated St. Bertrand with mock gravity. “Do not beautiful sentiments like these make one pure and good ? Do not they elevate the soul ?”

All, save Olinda, felt distrust at such open flattery and treacherous duplicity, but she withdrew much gratified at hearing these sympathetic expressions fall from his lips.

What a hardened reprobate must this man have been, thus to listen to the pure virtuous converse of the innocent girl whom, with devilish purpose, he intended on the morrow to drag to ruin, like a lamb led to the slaughter !

Before reclining for rest on their mats, Henry and Edwardes unlooped the tent fastening to look whether the guard were duly stationed without. There a group of wild Arabs were huddled together round a yule log of ilex that blazed in a deep hole scooped out of the ground, the brilliant red of the flame lighting up the swarthy features of the brigand-looking natives.

“Pleasant protectors !” Henry exclaimed.
“Men ready for any ruffianism.”

“So they are,” Edwardes replied, “but in the Khalifa’s good intentions I have confidence. He will not betray us.”

“Must he not obey orders, though?” said Henry.

“He will get no orders to act against us,” replied the other. “Dare a superior officer, think you, place himself in the power of such a dangerous unprincipled character? There is the man,” he continued, pointing to Raoul, who was arranging the padded end of his Persian mat under his head, “whom I mistrust, with his mock Spahis, his treacherous smile, and his false heart.”

CHAPTER VI.

ABDUCTION OF OLINDA.

SLEEPING on the hard ground and sore bones consequent thereon are conducive to early rising. The occupants of the Kaïd's tent were therefore astir betimes, and preparing for the start.

St. Bertrand had taken notice of the confidential whisperings and suppressed suspicions of his guests overnight, as they all but shunned his society—conduct he would have deeply resented were a clear conscience within him. But, knowing with what good cause he was distrusted, he affected to treat the matter with unconcern as he lounged out to make final arrangements with the Khalifa.

“You see now,” he remarked in a careless tone as he lighted a cigar, “how needless were your alarms. Here we are all safe and well, unmurdered by those terrible Spahis.”

“True,” said Edwardes after he had gone, “as yet we are safe and well. But we must not forget the old story of the ‘Ides of March.’ ”

"You do not mean it will be a case of 'seize her'?" the American retorted, with a knowing wink.

"Very good. Very good indeed," responded Edwardes, laughing heartily. "No, that must not happen. After our weary night of sentry-work, we must not allow ourselves to be surprised and circumvented in broad daylight."

Johnson added that such a humiliating defeat must be made impossible, and that their programme of taking the duty by turns all day to attend on Olinda must be carried out to the letter.

"And a very pleasant duty too," added Edwardes. "One hears of duty first and pleasure after, but here we have the two combined."

When the Khalifa was marshalling the cavalcade, two fiery Arabian coursers were led out for Olinda and Geraldine; but Miss Thornton had no faith in her own equestrian powers on such an occasion, and was forced to join the hunt on muleback, her tiny feet, in which she felt such pride, being comfortably deposited in hanging hampers on either side of the animal as she mounted the pad on its back. Her Arab attendant wounded her delicate sensibilities by handing her with a grin a piece of stick sharpened to a point with his dagger-knife, after he had prodded the mule to exemplify its use.

"You wicked, barbarous wretch!" she ejacu-

lated, regarding the man with righteous indignation when she beheld the beast writhe and wince with pain.

Nevertheless, during the day, when the jaded, starved creature refused to respond to the stimulating cries of "ariyah" raised by the merciless muleteer, she liberally applied the implement of torture, rather than be left behind away from the cherished society of the gentlemen, and alone with her native muleteer.

"Accept my best thanks, Marquis," said Olinda with one of her happiest smiles, as she stood admiring her prancing and snorting steed, "for mounting me on such a beautiful creature. He is a perfect picture."

"And as good as he looks," replied the hussar. "He has a long and severe day's work before him, but he will come in as fresh as now at starting." This he said with a wicked triumphant leer, which his guileless companion failed to perceive.

She hoped Raoul would have acted as her cavalier, and favoured her with his welcome presence throughout the day; but, to her mortification, he fell back shortly after starting to join the rest of the party. This he did in pursuance of his cold-blooded policy, so as to remove by apparent neglect of her and absorption in other pursuits any supposition of his complicity in the forthcoming tragedy.

"Your cousin's seat on horseback is perfect," he superciliously observed to Wilton, reining up beside him. "That habit sets off her lovely lithe figure *à merveille*. I never saw her look so *ravissante*."

"Miss Somerton is an excellent horsewoman," Henry replied coldly.

"That is fortunate," the other continued, "for she has a long ride in prospect to-day—longer than you may suppose."

This was said in resentment at Wilton's stiff reply; but, perceiving in a moment what an unguarded expression he had allowed to escape, he added with a bland, frank smile:

"We shall all feel tired when we return to-night. A hard ride over these wild rocky wastes, galloping up and down hill all day, is severe work for the best horseman."

On the way Edwardes took occasion to ask the Khalifa concerning the four strange cavaliers who had caused such anxiety.

"Early this morning they went on their way," he replied in a whisper, "as mysteriously as they came. Allah grant we may see no more of them. They fill me with fear."

After a long ride through the bleak hills and brushwood of the Tessala, the hunting-ground was reached, where a couple of hundred natives, many mounted on horses and mules, were grouped in waiting. These the Khalifa spread

out as a long line of beaters, when the *chasse* commenced, and the hour for St. Bertrand's fiendish crime drew nigh.

"Will you excuse our attendance, ladies?" said the Marquis as he rode up. "We men are going to try for a trophy to lay at your feet. My own Spahi will guide you to the tops of hills, whence you can see all that goes on, unless indeed you prefer to join the hunt. However, as you are unarmed, and not given, moreover, to the wanton shedding of blood, that would entail useless fatigue.

"Besides," he added with a laugh, "all the proddings of Miss Thornton's goad would not induce her steed to keep up such a headlong pace."

"For shame, aunt," exclaimed Olinda, turning round to address the old lady. "Is it possible you have been guilty of such cruelty, not having the fear of the Royal Humane Society before your eyes?"

"I can assure you I saw your aunt digging away with a will just now when she wanted to get near Mr. Edwardes," he continued, highly entertained by Miss Thornton's annoyance at having been detected in the very act.

"That is an abominable, wicked calumny," she replied. "I never did anything of the kind. Mr. Edwardes knows very well that I never thought of trying to follow him."

"Cordially I endorse that assertion," interposed Edwardes, "for I know you too well, Miss Thornton, to suspect you of such weakness—such tender, amiable weakness."

The bashful smile produced by this dubious compliment, which he uttered with an air of gravity, was rudely dispelled by his unwelcome inquiries as to the accusation of torturing her steed.

"Is it possible that you rooted this diabolical spike into the unhappy beast's side?" he continued, feigning a shudder of horror as he took into his hand the implement of torture.

"The miserable slug was so lazy and so perverse, how else could I force him onward?" she dolefully pleaded.

"We are letting time slip past," interrupted St. Bertrand, burning with impatience for the climax. "Come on, gentlemen. This way."

"If the ladies are not to ride along with us, would it not be well for one of our party to remain behind with them for protection?" called out Wilton, stopping him.

"Not the slightest necessity," answered the other snappishly, though trying to make it appear that his chagrin arose, not through the precautions for Olinda's safety, but solely through Wilton's interference with his plans for the hunt. "I have made all necessary arrangements for the day, and everything will go right if you

will only confide in my management and refrain from interfering."

"Besides," resumed Henry, determined not to be thus cajoled, "the ladies have not yet spoken, and surely they should have a voice in deciding their own fate. Miss Somerton, I should have thought, would enjoy a more active part in the novel exciting scene than being a mere looker-on."

And his conjecture about his high-spirited cousin was correct; but Olinda was too much under the influence of the designing traitor to dispute his authority or thwart his wishes, so she blindly submitted to stay behind with her aunt, and made Geraldine remain likewise, though sorely against her will.

"Very well, then, I station myself beside you, Olinda, to preserve you from harm and danger," said Wilton with a smile. "I trust you appreciate my gallantry and self-denial in doing guardian angel."

"On the contrary, Henry," she replied in the same merry strain, "I want you to be a destroying angel and help to kill a boar. Though your company is always so welcome, I by no means appreciate your refusing to follow Monsieur de St. Bertrand's advice, who knows this country and the natives so much better than we can. Were there the slightest necessity that you should thus forego your amusement on behalf of

us ladies, he would be the first to give warning and ask you to keep watch and ward."

"Sensibly spoken," Raoul ejaculated. "Now what say you, Mr. Wilton?"

"What I said before," the other quietly answered. "Here I stop."

"Well, I cannot prevent you from doing what you choose, however unwise," sulkily growled St. Bertrand. "You English are very headstrong and determined."

"When we know we are right," Henry retorted, calmly surveying the irritated and disconcerted Frenchman.

"Well, let us be moving," the latter called out in vexation, addressing the rest. "It is provoking to have one's party of pleasure broken up through mere wilful caprice."

"That I deny, Marquis de St. Bertrand," Wilton firmly retaliated. "I am not influenced by mere wilful caprice; for what I do I have good and sufficient reasons. Am I not at liberty to act as I think proper without having my actions criticized and my motives misrepresented?"

"Have your way, then," the hussar angrily called out as he rode away, seeing resistance was useless and would only attract comment. "But remember, Mr. Wilton, I henceforth wash my hands of all responsibility. Should any accident occur, blame not me."

"That was a strange speech, Olinda," observed Henry, when the others left. "What can he mean? What accident is likely to occur?"

"He is simply mortified at your meddlesome upsetting of his plans," she answered with much acrimony. "Such an ungracious return for his great good-nature is inexcusable. I feel quite ashamed to own you for my cousin."

"Very polite and affectionate!" he responded somewhat bitterly. "But I shall take no heed. I know how infatuated you are with that Frenchman, and how you think he can do no wrong."

"*Pardonnez moi* for my rudeness," she said, giving him her hand with a smile, in reconciliation. "You mean kindly, but your solicitude, *entre nous*, is sadly misplaced. In fact, you are excessively troublesome."

"And I intend to continue troublesome," he added in a playful tone; "so do not flatter yourself you will shake me off so easily."

"How silly you are!" she went on, laughing at his pertinacity, in spite of her annoyance at the way he was thwarting the wishes of their host. "Get away, like a good fellow, and take your share in the sport. Do not make yourself look so ridiculous. Hark! There is game afoot," she added, listening. "Do you not hear the wild yells of the natives?"

"True. They have found a boar," he cried

excitedly, and longing to be away to the front. "Come on to yonder rising ground, and we shall see the chase, I think, from there. If not, the Marquis's Spahi will guide us aright."

And he looked round for their mounted escort, but none was in sight nor within hail, though he loudly called.

A native however, on horseback, as though springing out of the ground, appeared of a sudden on the stony eminence in front, who with frantic gestures beckoned them forward.

Wilton, Olinda, and Geraldine dashed off, responsive to his summons, and Alice Thornton endeavoured to follow by the aid of her pointed goad, which she liberally applied. But, finding that even such powerful logic failed to convince the poor weary brute she bestrode, she screamed after Olinda to come back, and not leave her alone amongst the lawless savages.

Olinda's goodness of heart and affection overcame her ardent desire to witness the exciting scene ahead.

She deliberated, and she was lost. Turning her horse round, she rejoined the old lady. The two were left by themselves, for their relatives had disappeared behind the brow towards which Olinda had accompanied them.

A couple of armed Spahis now dashed forth from the dense mass of caroubier and ilex brake behind, and abruptly told Olinda to accompany

them, in accordance with orders they had received.

As she hesitated to leave the old lady and her well-goaded mule, they rapidly moved up close, one on either side. Seizing the reins of her horse they plunged their long, huge-rowelled spurs into the flanks of their chargers, started away at a rapid gallop with their prey and were speedily lost to the sight of the shrieking and terrified Alice Thornton.

Perceiving they were carrying her away in a direction opposite to where the yells of the Arab beaters and the shots of the hunters were loudly echoing, Olinda became greatly alarmed, and ordered the men to let her go free. But they pretended not to understand what she meant, and motioned her on.

No longer doubting their evil intentions, she screamed aloud, insisting on being conducted to the Marquis de St. Bertrand.

By this time two other Spahis joined them, and the four indulged in loud merriment at this unlucky sally of their victim.

"Most certainly," one of the new-comers called out, assuming a tone of gravity that highly entertained his comrades. "We are taking you as fast as we can to where you will meet the gallant Marquis. Have patience, Mademoiselle, and you shall have your wishes amply gratified."

“Atrocious monsters!” she shrieked; “unhand me this moment, or I will fling myself from the saddle, sooner than be led off a prisoner, I know not whither, by such rude lawless wretches.”

“Thank you, Mademoiselle, for giving timely notice,” one of the men coolly replied, who seemed to be their leader, while he placed his hand on the back of Olinda’s saddle, beckoning to another Spahi to do the same on the opposite side of her horse. “Now, Mademoiselle,” he continued, with a complacent smile, “you will not find it so easy to put your threat into practice. It would be heart-rending to lose so charming a captive.”

“*En route* for the Marquis,” he added, spurring on his steed anew.

And a fresh peal of hellish laughter from his partners in crime greeted the coarse, unfeeling jest.

CHAPTER VII.

RESCUE.

ONWARD Olinda and her abductors sped, over slippery rocks and large boulder stones, scrambling up and down the sides of steep ravines, threading their mazy way through the tangled *broussaille*, and starting away again at railroad pace over every available space of smooth grassy plain.

Shaping their course for the Desert by the pass at Hadja Roum, through which, of old, the Zenatians and other wild Gætulian tribes of the Sahara had surged northwards to conquer and plunder the rich regions of the Tell and the Magreb or Land of the West, they reached the ruins of the ancient Roman city of Rubræ, founded to command this important highway through the Tessala Mountains.

Rapidly they galloped over the once busy streets of the populous and important settlement, and plunged into the dark recesses of the rocky gorge beyond.

“Now we are safe,” ejaculated Auguste Pécoul with a sigh of relief, as he reined in his fleet Arabian, for he was the leader of the lawless gang. “No danger of rescue here.”

Scarce had he spoken when, from an ambuscade behind a high projecting rock in the way, a band of burnoused horsemen dashed out to attack, headed by two unveiled young women on horseback, armed to the teeth, and wearing rich costumes of coloured satin elaborately embroidered with gold. The war-horses they bestrode were superbly caparisoned : one a bright chestnut with flowing flaxen mane and tail, the other a light grey whose sweeping tail was dyed crimson with henna.

The two horsewomen advanced in front of the troop, and she on the chestnut, who appeared the commander, drawing her sword, called on the Spahis to surrender along with their prisoner.

In the fair Amazons before him Auguste Pécoul promptly recognised Azzahra and Zorah, whom he had met in the apartments of the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser at Hammam R'rira ; but he desired not the recognition to be mutual, for he hoped to draw them into a parley and prevail on them to let his party pass southward through the mountain chain, which they would undoubtedly refuse did they know him to be a French officer. He feared less to brave danger amongst the

lawless natives under the ægis of such gentle protectors, than to return discomfited to where Olinda would assuredly effect her escape and defeat the project so well planned by his comrade, and so well executed, hitherto, by himself. He dreaded, in addition, that when Olinda's statement was heard, inquiries would be set on foot by his superiors as to the pretended Spahis in the camp of the Ouled-Mimoum, which might result in some unforeseen *dénouement*, implicating his friend and himself.

"Why call upon us to surrender?" he fawningly demanded. "We mean no harm to you or yours. We are on duty, escorting this fair lady, at her own request, to the Marquis de St. Bertrand."

"That cannot be true," Azzahra scornfully replied. "Neither the Marquis nor any other French officer can venture to the south of the Tessala, into the country held by Si Sala, without a commanding force at his back. The Marquis you are coming away from, and that you well know."

"Is not that so, lady?" she continued, turning to Olinda, whom she at once recollected to have seen at the monastery of Staouéli, and previously at the Marengo gardens in Algiers. "I can not believe that a French officer would be so insane as to enter almost alone these inhospitable regions when rebellion is rife in the land."

"What these men state is a gross fabrication," Olinda eagerly protested. "Monsieur de St. Bertrand is not in the Desert. Only two or three short hours since we left him far behind. And these men are no Spahis on duty, as they falsely pretend. They are base robbers, dragging me, against my will, to what awful doom I know not."

"Speak not thus," angrily interrupted Pécoul. "Did you not demand to be conducted to the Marquis?"

"But not away from him," she answered, bursting into tears. "Oh! do but take me back into his presence, and he will see justice done."

"I swear on my honour as a gentleman," exclaimed Pécoul, momentarily forgetting his assumed character, "we are taking you on to where you will meet the Marquis. Only have patience, and trust in our good faith."

"Alas! that I should have been spared from shipwreck to meet such a terrible fate," groaned Olinda. "Oh! have pity, and save me from these men," she shrieked, addressing Azzahra, as she urged her horse forward and endeavoured to force herself free. "You look so gentle and so good, I throw myself on your mercy for protection."

This was a trying moment for Azzahra. The "fair woman" who was to "cross her path"—who had so direfully crossed her path already—

in her power, and humbling herself before her as a suppliant! Should she save this woman? or should she let her be hurried to perdition? for well she could perceive these were no Spahis, and well she surmised their diabolical purpose. The temptation was strong to take vengeance for the past, and to destroy the power for evil in the future. But her pure, noble, unselfish nature triumphed. She determined to stretch out the hand of deliverance, and rescue a trembling sister from the foul grasp of the spoiler.

She gave the order to her mounted warriors to charge with drawn swords, and set free the prisoner. The Arabs advanced in such overpowering numbers that Pécoul saw resistance was vain, and that he must try to retreat with his prize. But in this he was foiled. While in the act of dragging round Olinda's horse, in spite of her struggles and her piercing cries, Kredoudja and a band of musketeers on foot sprang upon the high rock above his head, and pointed their flint matchlocks down at the heads of himself and his hireling comrades in villainy.

"Let go that horse's bridle," Azzahra now called out to Auguste in a voice of command, "or you are a dead man. As for you and your impostor Spahis, begone. For the sake of this lady I release you, rather than let you remain near her, to mature fresh plots for compassing her destruction."

With fearful imprecations, and a scowl of disappointed passion at Olinda, Pécoul led back his Zouave mercenaries, and slowly retraced his steps out of the glen.

Sinking off her horse, exhausted by bodily fatigue and mental excitement, Olinda lay prostrate and helpless on the ground at the feet of Azzahra.

"How ever repay your noble generosity in saving me from the jaws of destruction!" she murmured, as well as her hysterical sobbings would permit. "But for you, what, alas! would have been my fate?"

"Calm yourself, my dear lady," Azzahra softly responded. "While with me and my beloved friend Zorah, no danger can approach."

"How strange!" Olinda exclaimed as Azzahra bent affectionately over her. "Your face seems so familiar, and so does your voice, that I feel as if we had met before. But, of course, that is impossible."

A deep tell-tale blush on Azzahra's soft cheek showed it was not impossible.

In astonishment Olinda surveyed more minutely the glowing features of her protectress.

"Could it have been at the Abbey gate of Staouéli we met?" she incredulously asked. "Oh! no, impossible."

No reply being vouchsafed, and Azzahra's colour still rising, she wonderingly continued:

"You the common, ragged beggar-girl, to whom I offered charity, and who repelled me with such haughty scorn? Oh! is this possible? surely my eyes and ears deceive me. Speak! and say can this be so? Can it be that you are the same?"

"I am the same," answered Azzahra, profoundly humbled and abashed at having been seen in such foul garments. "It was me whom you addressed at Staouéli, and who, alas! replied in hasty ungrateful terms that so ill-suited my abject appearance. Can you forgive such rudeness and ingratitude?"

"Forgive you, dear? Of course, willingly," kindly responded Olinda.

"But wherefore appear in such strange offensive guise," Olinda resumed, unable to solve the mystery, "when here you wear this rich apparel? Never shall I forget your miserable rags."

"No more shall I," echoed Zorah, heartily laughing at the recollection of the disreputable appearance her friend presented when she arrived in the Kaïd's house at Chenoua. "We had a great mind to drive the disreputable creature away from our door."

"Had I not worn that dress," Azzahra said, in reply to Olinda, "I should not have been here to-day, and you would not have been saved from a calamity worse than death."

Olinda beseeching of her to explain, she told how she and her father were forced to assume

the garb and appearance of mendicants, to escape undetected from Algiers, that they might head the brave tribes banded together to free their native land from the invader.

"Then you are in league with Si Sala, the great rebel chieftain?" asked Olinda.

"Si Sala is my father," proudly answered the heroic girl, "and me they call 'The Child of the Desert.'"

Remembering how Edwardes had described Si Sala as a traitorous miscreant, fighting merely for the sake of rapine and murder, Olinda felt in great dread at having fallen into his power. Nevertheless, the undoubted goodness and artlessness of Azzahra, for whom she already entertained a warm friendship, was to her a guarantee of safety.

Azzahra read what was passing in the mind of her captive. She could see that far from honouring her father as a noble hero, warring for the glory and salvation of his country, Olinda regarded him as a dangerous outlaw, to be shunned by the weak and hunted down by the strong.

This discovery wounded her noble heart, which beat high with patriotic fervour, and yearned after the clash of arms that would strike down the despoiler. The crimes of her parent—his murder of the spy at the Café Maure; his nearly accomplished murder at the Tomb of

the Christian ; worst of all, because uncalled for by necessity, his attempt, only averted by herself at the risk of her life, to shoot down every living soul on the stranded yacht—all were condoned and lost sight of in admiring enthusiasm, when she beheld him mounted on his battle-steed leading on his armed hosts, and glittering in warlike array.

“Our gallant struggle to shake off the foreign yoke, you clearly regard with disfavour,” she said, addressing Olinda ; “but make the case your own. Were your native land conquered and wrested from you by a haughty, domineering foe, were you trampled upon and ground down in debased slavery, would not you thirst for freedom and for vengeance ?”

“For freedom I should unquestionably thirst with all my heart and soul, I admit,” replied Olinda, “and should consider justifiable every effort to recover my lost liberty. But remember the difference between my country and this. We are worthy to be free, for we know how to govern ourselves and to use our freedom aright. Is such, I ask you, the case in these lands ?”

“It is not,” sadly responded Azzahra, “and the remembrance of this mournful truth ever fills me with sorrow and dismay. But perchance some chieftain will spring up among us, more fortunate than the great Emir, who will become a mighty and upright ruler over the people.”

"My poor child! you are carried away by delusive hopes and vain imaginations," Olinda continued, fondly embracing her. "Dream not that victory can ever be yours against the powerful disciplined hosts that hold you in subjection. Dream not that, even were the land freed from their presence to-morrow, the untrained uneducated men of your race could carry on any form of government which would not speedily collapse in chaotic confusion."

"Why not make the attempt?" Azzahra retorted, though with considerable hesitation. "Did we prove our power to stand alone, and to maintain our independence, what renown would he earn who effected such a glorious deliverance!"

"Love of romance and adventure blind and deceive you," said Olinda, smiling. "In your heart of hearts you know well that your case is hopelessly desperate. The art of self-government cannot but be an unknown quantity, an incomprehensible mystery, a physical impossibility in regions whose inhabitants have never had the iron heel of the despotic conqueror removed from off their necks in the memory of man. Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Spaniards, Turks, and French have swept over and possessed the land in unbroken succession. Where, then, is this freedom of which you speak, and which you want to regain?"

Azzahra was speechless. She knew how just and well-merited was the withering censure. She knew how worthless, how degraded, how incapable of exaltation were her people, how hopelessly steeped in ignorance and vice.

The discomfiture of Azzahra caused great merriment to the shallow fickle Zorah, who cared less for patriotism and renown than for the fleeting pleasures of the moment, and to whom the humiliating strictures on her compatriots brought no pain nor shame.

"This love of country and solicitude for the independence of our people is all pretence," she exclaimed, addressing Olinda and laughing. "Azzahra has a Christian lover for whom she would give up native land and all she once held dear, without a sigh or a pang of regret."

"It is very wrong of you to make such unwarrantable assertions," Azzahra interposed, greatly annoyed at the silly thoughtlessness of her friend.

"Unwarrantable indeed! you know they are true," replied Zorah, with a mischievous laugh. "You know, too, you nearly got drowned trying to save his cherished life."

The revelations by the giddy, senseless child of nature sorely distressed Azzahra, who feared that their guest would presently come to identify her as having been implicated in the lawless scene at Chenoua.

To complete her confusion, Olinda, commenting on what Zorah had said, related her narrow escape from destruction when shipwrecked at the headlands of Chenoua, and how a young native woman, one of a party of bloodthirsty wreckers who clambered down the rocks to shoot them down as their vessel tossed helplessly about, had fallen into the sea when rushing in front of the levelled weapons to stop their fire.

“The truth is,” Olinda continued, “she wanted to save the life of my cousin, for he and this girl are devoted lovers. How she came, though, to be implicated in such barbarous infamy neither he nor I can comprehend, for he describes her as being nurtured in luxury and refinement, and her father’s house he calls a palatial paradise. The moment we return to Algiers we will have a thorough investigation into the circumstances, for I shall never rest contented until these monsters are discovered and punished. The Marquis de St. Bertrand lays all the blame at the door of the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser, the tribe that inhabit that district, who he declares shall be held responsible for the savage and inhuman outrage.

When Zorah heard these accusations and these threats of preconcerted retribution, even her childish levity fled before the terror they inspired for the safety of her tribe.

With prudence and presence of mind that

astonished Azzahra, who was colouring and betraying agitation that would speedily have attracted the notice of their visitor, Zorah adroitly turned away Olinda's attention by inquiring about the shipwreck of which she had spoken.

"That wicked, infamous woman I never can forget," Olinda continued, after she had given a graphic account of the dangers she had encountered, and her happy rescue by the advent of the steamer from the hands of the ruffian gang on shore. "My cousin she certainly did save, but she was bent upon rapine and murder before she happened to see him on the deck. Alas! that my poor deluded relative should lavish his love on such a base unprincipled wretch! Oh, may she meet her just reward!"

Hearing footsteps approach the tent, she turned away her head to look, so that she perceived not the overwhelming discomfiture that befell the unhappy Azzahra.

The "fair woman" again crossing her path, and plotting to hunt her down! this terrible, terrible fair woman! How escape from her baleful influence? Though so fair and gentle to look on, what a merciless persecutor! a persecutor she had saved, too, by her goodnature, thus harbouring and befriending a viper to sting her—a remorseless foe to lift up the heel against her.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHERE IS SHE?

DASHING impetuously onward, and confident that Olinda was still close behind, Wilton soon cleared the height from which came the mysterious summons, and was galloping down the brow at the farther side when his course was arrested by two men on foot, in the uniform of the Spahis, who sprang from the cover and seized hold of his horse's head. In a moment he was dragged to the ground, his hands and feet were bound, so that he could not move, and his mouth was gagged so that he could not cry aloud for assistance. Leaving him in this helpless condition, the two then mounted, one of them upon his horse, and rode rapidly away into the depths of the brushwood.

By good fortune, Geraldine saw them depart, and, perceiving that one was riding on her brother's horse, she suspected foul play, and hastened to the spot where she last saw him charging behind some thick scrub over the brow

beside her. A strange gurgling sound, not far distant, attracted her notice, and repairing to the spot, she discovered Wilton in his hapless predicament.

When she had loosened his bonds, the two, heedless of the exciting and deafening shouts of the chase that resounded on every side, hurried back to search for Olinda and Alice Thornton. The latter they soon came across, weeping bitterly, loudly vociferating, and prodding the spike into her mule with inhuman energy.

Breathlessly she narrated the terrible tragedy she had witnessed—how the two Spahis had plunged forth on horseback from the coppice, and had ruthlessly dragged away her niece by force before her very eyes.

Henry eagerly inquired whether Olinda had offered resistance, for the melancholy thought struck him that the Frenchman possessed now such unbounded power over his cousin, he might have made the weak girl consent to an elopement, and connive voluntarily at a pretended outrage.

“At first, she seemed too bewildered and frightened to realise her danger,” feebly replied the sobbing old lady, “but before she vanished from sight I could see her remonstrate and struggle to get free.”

“Heaven be praised ! She had no hand, act, nor part, then, in working out her own misery and

disgrace!" thankfully ejaculated her cousin. "This is a mysterious business," he resumed after anxious meditation, as they sorrowfully left the spot, and sought the hunting party, "which must be sifted to the bottom. Such villainy shall be dragged to light and severely punished, no matter what consequences ensue."

When she heard this defiant language, the good woman was grievously alarmed, foreseeing the danger her nephew might incur by headstrong impetuosity.

"You will get into a quarrel with this wicked Frenchman, and he will kill you, if you cross his path," she tearfully ejaculated, as she implored of her nephew to calm his indignation.

"Cross his path? what mean you?" he asked in surprise. "I want not to cross his path, nor to get into a quarrel with him or any other man. What I want is to find my unhappy cousin, and to chastise her abductors."

As they proceeded, threading their way through the matted bushes, mounting and descending rocky precipitous heights, and clambering along the steep sides of ravines by paths that scarce afforded foot-room, Wilton reflected on the words of his aunt. What did she imply by the remark about his crossing the path of their host? Could she suspect St. Bertrand to be the criminal?

"I understand not why you fear my quarrel-

ling with the Marquis de St. Bertrand by following up this matter and instituting a searching investigation," he resumed. "Surely he will be the first to join and assist in every endeavour to recover his lost guest. Hitherto, I own, his conduct has inspired me with constant alarm; but yonder he rides, so the crime cannot be his."

"Have you forgotten the mysterious Spahis with whom he associated so freely last night?" she inquired in surprise. "These were the same who dragged off my poor ill-fated niece, and no doubt at his instigation."

"Fool that I am, and slow of heart to comprehend!" Henry exclaimed. "The case is clear. Two secured Olinda, while the other two secured me. The proud hussar shall answer for this."

Again Miss Thornton with tears besought him to refrain from angry recriminations, which could but lead to disaster.

"Diplomatise, and be gentle. Persuade him you trust his honour and loyalty," she pleaded. "You will best serve Olinda's interests and your own by thus leaving a loop-hole for escape. But oh! wake not, I implore, the vindictive spirit of this black-souled villain."

"The case requires promptitude and energy," he replied. "The hour has passed for smooth-tongued politeness. The time for action has come."

"But not action that may entail your death," she went on wailing aloud. "Olinda I have lost; must I lose you too? Oh! think how Olinda would grieve at your sacrificing your life in a wicked sinful duel for her sake."

"Think how Olinda would grieve if I made no effort to save her," he retorted, with a tone of authority that stifled further protests.

St. Bertrand now drew near along with his friends, followed by the rabble rout of natives, some of whom carried on their shoulders by a long pole a huge old boar with enormous white tusks, the trophy of the chase.

"Here is a venerable patriarch to lay at Miss Somerton's feet," he jauntily called out, as he drew nigh. "But what have you done with Miss Somerton? where is she?" he continued in skillfully assumed surprise at her non-appearance, as he looked at Wilton.

"That is what I ask you, Marquis de St. Bertrand. What have you done with her? She is lost, and I demand to know where she is."

"Such language I understand not, sir," the hussar replied, striving to seem indignant, although inwardly trembling at heart before the avenger. "Who made me a keeper over your cousin? You took her in charge against my advice, and you I hold responsible for her safety."

"These subterfuges will not avail, Monsieur le

Marquis," answered Henry with determination. "Let us understand one another, and cease to bandy words where time is precious. My cousin I want restored, and you will have to restore her."

"Restore her! How can I restore her?" he sulkily growled. "Let those who lost her get her back."

"Be it so, then," Wilton coolly answered. "By you she was lost, by you shall she be saved. Your mock Spahi friends were the wretches who stole her away."

"It is false," roared Raoul, livid with fury. "They were not near the place."

"You appear to know their movements well," said Henry with a calm glance; "but Miss Thornton and I happen to know them better. Two of these ruffians were my cousin's assailants, and two more threw me from my horse, which they afterwards stole, when they had bound and gagged me to prevent alarm being given."

"Wherefore connect me with these men?" asked the Frenchman, beginning to feel alarmed at the dauntless attitude his foe assumed.

"Simply because they are your friends," Wilton replied. "Think you not I noticed all that passed last night?"

The Khalifa here galloped up, flushed with excitement, and his foam-flecked war-horse panting with fatigue.

“Alas! mon Capitaine, a terrible calamity has befallen the Ouled-Mimoum,” he wildly shouted as he drew nigh. “The fair-haired daughter of Europe is gone from our midst, taken by those children of Satan and sons of perdition whom we harboured throughout the night.”

“Don’t believe a word of this,” called out Raoul to his guests. “Either he himself or his tribe have committed this outrage, and they shall pay the penalty.”

“Wretched man that I am!” exclaimed the Khalifa, wringing his hands in despair. “Well I foretold this accusation would be flung in my teeth. But Allah knows I speak the truth. Did not my people recognise the white fetlocks of the horse the leader rode, as he dashed over the hills with his prize!”

Miss Thornton asked whether the horse had three white fetlocks, for such marks the charger of one of the pretended Spahis bore.

“The very same,” exclaimed the Arab, overjoyed at his statement receiving this confirmation.

“Why that is the identical animal the leader of the party led in his hand while you and he held such familiar intercourse last night,” added Wilton addressing St. Bertrand.

St. Bertrand angrily turned on him and demanded to what he alluded when he spoke of familiar intercourse with a mere private of Spahis.

"I allude to your shaking hands with him, private or no private," he replied, "whispering confidentially with him, giving him the parting injunction to 'be firm,' and holding secret converse with him late at night by the side of the *broussaille* when we were all retiring to rest."

"The way you speak is perfectly ridiculous," the Frenchman answered. "You would seem to forget that the soldiers were on duty employed by our Government."

"That point can be soon set at rest on our return to Tlemcen," Wilton replied with a calm, frigid look that made the hussar tremble for the consequences of a *dénouement* before his military chiefs.

"You hit him between wind and water there," whispered the Yankee to Wilton, noticing their host's look of dismay.

"Now, Marquis, let us be off to the rescue," continued Johnson. "Time flies, so we must fly too, in pursuit. Should our fair friend once get down to the mysterious depths of the Sahara, we shall no more behold her divine face."

"Gently, my friend," interposed Raoul with a polite though scornful smile. "You are ignorant of the dangers and difficulties that surround a raid into the desert among its wild and lawless tribes. Before our return to Tlemcen no steps can be taken. There a party of cavalry

and supplies for the march can be procured, but from here the attempt would be utter madness."

Hearing his superior procrastinate and try to stave off pursuit for so long, the Khalifa advanced to propose that his brother and some other trustworthy warriors of the Ouled-Mimoum should start at once in pursuit along with any who chose to accompany them, and for whose safe conduct he would be surety. Selfishness, more than compassion for the victim or her sorrowing friends, prompted the proposal, for he was in grievous fear lest the perpetration of the outrage should be laid at his door. Edwardes, Johnson, and Frederick thankfully accepted the offer, to the manifest vexation of Raoul, who endeavoured to deter them by gloomy pictures of the impossibility of procuring food or shelter, as well as of the risks they would incur of being captured, or even murdered.

But the Khalifa was so persistent in assurances that all their wants would be supplied, and that no harm would befall them while under his protection and guarded by his escort, that St. Bertrand's attempts to induce delay were passed by unheeded.

This unwelcome interference by the Arab Chief deeply enraged the hussar. "You evidently have a good understanding with these rebel bands away south," he angrily remarked.

"Naturally. Are they not my countrymen

and my brothers, although my heart is with you?" the native humbly responded. He then plunged his huge spur rowels into the sides of his charger, eager to organize the expedition for pursuing the fugitives through the mountain pass towards which his followers had seen them hasten.

Edwardes and the American were perplexed that Wilton offered not to join in the search for his cousin, but he was playing a deeper game. Sufficient, he thought, were already starting under the charge of the Ouled-Mimoum. He determined, therefore, to remain by the Marquis, never leave his side, watch him unceasingly and see that no time was wasted in preparing at Tlemcen for their march to the desert.

As soon as their friends had galloped away with their Arab guides on their mission after Olinda, Henry urged his companion to press on to Hadja-Roum, so as to reach Tlemcen before dark.

"My dear sir, you know not what you say," rejoined the other with provoking coolness, for he saw the futility of trying to domineer by violence over a man who had obtained the mastery and clearly purposed to keep close guard upon his actions. "Reach Tlemcen before dark? Impossible! You forget the distance we are now from Hadja-Roum and the fatigues of our long hunt. You forget that one of the

party rides a sorry jaded mule, which all the 'ariyahs' and spike-proddings in Christendom could not enliven. You forget, too, the deep white slime of the road, in which our wheels will stick, and through which our horses can scarce drag the lumbering vehicle."

"Think not but that I am as solicitous as yourself to recover your missing treasure," he resumed, offering a cigar to Wilton, which the latter coldly declined; "but beyond Hadja-Roum I stir not till morning. *Parbleu*, what would be gained by such worry to ourselves and such fatigue to our fair friends? At so late an hour no step could be taken at Tlemcen to advance the cause we all have so deeply at heart."

Alice Thornton and Geraldine ardently entreated that no delay should occur on their account, professing their willingness to undergo any hardship for the sake of their beloved Olinda; but it was decided that an early start in the morning would answer every purpose.

During dinner, which was devoured by the hungry hunters with a relish as keen as though Olinda were safe beside them, a letter was handed to St. Bertrand, at sight of which his self-possession forsook him, so that he remained speechless and aghast with dismay. It came from Pécoul, and merely contained the words:

"All is lost, save honour. Meet me at Tlemcen, without delay."

What could this import but that Olinda was lost? After all his labour and anxiety, after all his plans and schemes, the bird had escaped at the last moment out of the hand of the fowler. But how? That passed his comprehension. Surely in the grasp of four strong men one weak woman should be like clay in the hands of the potter, to be moulded according to their will.

"Where is she?" he continued to ask himself, absorbed in wonder and dismay. That her release would lead to some tragic scene he firmly believed, but what would happen, what she would do, he could not divine.

"Your communication seems important," said Henry after protracted silence.

"Important?" replied St. Bertrand, rising up from table. "So important that I must start for Tlemcen this moment. But pray let me not disturb you. In the morning I will wait on you, and put everything in train."

"Does your letter contain any information about Miss Somerton?" demanded Wilton, who entertained a strong suspicion, from the hussar's manner, that such was the case.

"Nothing of the sort, *parole d'honneur*," the other replied with earnestness, putting his hand upon his heart. "Another matter altogether, connected with my professional duties."

"But you told us this afternoon that no military business could be transacted by night,"

argued Henry, "and darkness has set in already."

"All the same, the matter presses and I am off," he exclaimed as he went out to prepare for the journey.

The air of secrecy and reserve in which the gallant dragoon's actions were enveloped, as in a haze, greatly alarmed Wilton, who feared this was but a well-concocted scheme to shake him off and get away from inconvenient supervision. That the missive which produced so great a change did in reality contain some allusion to Olinda's fate he doubted not, and he determined in consequence to stick to his enemy more closely than ever.

In this view the ladies concurred, and entreated that they might start at once along with their deeply suspected entertainer.

Wilton hurried out to let the Marquis know their change of plan, whom he found mounted and just on the point of riding away, suspecting, doubtless, that such a contingency might arise. Now he could frame no excuse, without exhibiting marked want of courtesy, for not waiting a few minutes to accompany his friends, instead of further taxing the powers of his steed, wearied by the severe fatigues of the day.

As it happened, this move checkmated the wily and unprincipled schemer. His plan was to steal away from Tlemcen by the first light of

the morning, pleading the excuse of a sudden summons to Algiers on urgent business, for he fully anticipated learning from his comrade not only that the prey had eluded their grasp, but also that she was once more free and about to appear again on the scene. With Olinda at liberty, wherefore remain at Tlemcen? Wherefore wait for her relatives, when there was to be no pursuit?

Besides, at any moment Olinda might arrive at Tlemcen, and he desired not to meet her, now that his attempts had clearly been frustrated and he could hope no longer for possession. Her recriminations, instigated by Wilton's disclosures, he dreaded. He dreaded fresh recriminations from Wilton. He dreaded having his conduct reported to the authorities.

But with Olinda back safe Wilton's ire would be subdued. Joy at her restoration would prevent her cousin from following up the attack against him in his absence, by dragging to light his mysterious dealings with the spurious Spahis. After a time the angry feelings entertained against him would subside, and his misdoings would be condoned. Devoutly he desired therefore, as it seemed fated she should return, that she might return quickly.

About her anticipated return, however, he could not dare to speak, for the admission of this knowledge would corroborate incontestably his

complicity with the abductors. How, except from them, could he have received the intelligence? These motives impelled him, reasoning by the light that Pécoul's hurried lines afforded, to desire escape. Now, however, that Olinda's friends were sticking to him with such tenacity, and would be close at hand in the town, what pretext could he devise for stealing away like a thief in the night? Intimate friends as they were, must he not perforce wait to go through the form of leave-taking on the morrow before his sudden departure? Then would fresh suspicions without fail arise. Naturally he would be accused of participation more strongly than ever in the outrage on Olinda, in consequence of relinquishing the pursuit, taking no steps for her rescue, hurriedly travelling away in a different direction. Yet no explanation could he venture to vouchsafe for such an unaccountable change of plan.

On the other hand to remain altogether, and to carry out the farce of pretending to prepare for the promised raid into the Desert, after he knew Olinda's approaching advent rendered it no longer necessary, was a greater risk than he cared to incur with his superiors. Were the terrible truth ever to come to light, the perpetration of such a gross deception would militate strongly against him and magnify his offence.

To screen himself, he was originally prepared

to run this risk, but he recoiled now when it appeared superfluous. Little he suspected it would not be superfluous! Little he suspected he would learn from Pécoul that Olinda was not free, that she was not coming back, and that he must at once to horse in hot pursuit!

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTIVE.

THE footsteps Olinda heard outside the tent, and which so opportunely prevented her detection of Azzahra's confusion, proceeded from the arrival of Al-Mansour and the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser, who had been absent together on a marauding foray.

"So my darling Zorah has been fighting an action and has taken a prisoner," exclaimed Abou Hassan, smiling, as he embraced his treasured bride, amused no little at the accounts he had heard of her valiant behaviour. "This will be a great day in the annals of the Beni-Men"

Ere he had time to finish the compromising word which would have revealed to Olinda that he was the man against whom she and St. Bertrand had vowed vengeance for the Chenouan outrage, Zorah sealed his lips in a way which never fails to prove efficacious by pressing them with hers so fervently that speech became impossible.

“My feat of arms will be a great event in the annals of the Beni-Menad,” she replied as soon as their love-passage was over, thus adroitly concluding with the name of another tribe the sentence she had interrupted when she heard the Kaïd about to mention the Beni-Menasser.

Abou Hassan was not slow to comprehend by her ready diplomacy and by the carefully concealed signs she made that secrecy was necessary, and followed the hints she gave.

“Great is my pride to-day,” he resumed, following her lead, “to be chief of the Beni-Menad, who own in their ranks such a valiant heroine.”

Azzahra’s relief was intense at seeing the storm blow past through Zorah’s tact which threatened to overwhelm her, for she had fully anticipated a *dénouement* before Olinda through Abou Hassan’s heedlessness, implicating her with the lawless Beni-Menasser at Chenoua by reason of her intimacy with their chieftain.

“But you must present me to your captive, Zorah,” resumed Abou Hassan, smiling, “whom I trust you treat not with undue severity.”

“She is very kind and good,” Olinda answered, “and, were I in reality a prisoner, would make an excessively lenient custodian.”

“But, my good lady, you are a prisoner,” interposed Al-Mansour. “Until the return of our chieftain, Si Sala, who is far away in the south,

I dare not undertake the responsibility of setting you free. But make your mind easy, your captivity will press lightly, in the society of such charming companions as Azzahra and Zorah."

That she was to be the captive of Si Sala was a terrible revelation, for this redoubtable leader was one of the last men into whose power Olinda desired to fall. But she looked at Azzahra and took courage. She trusted in her and felt safe under her protection.

Al-Mansour confirmed the feeling of security by an assurance that one word from Azzahra, on the return of her father, would gain for her her freedom.

"His daughter our chieftain loves dearly," continued Al-Mansour. "Did he know, though, about a certain Christian lover," he added, casting a glance at Azzahra, "she would not stand so high in his good graces."

This sally drew forth much merriment, except from Olinda, who understood not the cause of mirth, nor how closely it concerned herself.

Al-Mansour good-humouredly observed that her imprisonment would be very tame and unexciting, for there were no dismal dungeons in which she could be manacled, and she would be forced to partake of the best food that could be obtained in lieu of the stereotyped bread-and-water diet. All in their power should be done, he promised, to render her life agreeable. She

should be taken to the south to wander among the beautiful palm groves of the oases and to hunt the ostrich, the hare, and the bustard.

"If you come, too, you must recount some more of your Eastern tales," added Azzahra.

"Alas! from here I dare not move," Al-Mansour replied. "You know I am posted here as your father's Khalifa, to hold command of yonder mountain pass."

"The scene of your distinguished feat, my cherished one," added Abou Hassan, again fondly embracing his child-bride.

"Ah! our two heroines should have slain those four pretended Spahis, or at least have taken them prisoners," interposed Al-Mansour. "It was a fatal blunder to let them depart unscathed."

"Just what I say," echoed Olinda. "No punishment could be too severe for such worthless miscreants."

"The thought of shedding human blood makes me shudder," said Azzahra, in apology for her misplaced clemency.

"Of that I feel assured," replied Olinda, affectionately pressing her hand. "Far be it from such an innocent child to become implicated in scenes of slaughter."

Conscience-stricken, Azzahra cast a furtive glance at her companion; but no danger lurked in that kind, benevolent face: "the fair woman," this time, was not crossing her path.

Scarce had the soothing reflection passed, when Kredoudja entered the tent, and her Olinda at once knew to be the same who attended Henry's Arabian beauty in the Jardin Marengo.

In a moment she understood all; understood that Azzahra was her cousin's inamorata; understood it was for her he plunged into the billows at Chenoua, and for him that she dashed in front of the bloodthirsty Beni-Menasser; but she kept her counsel, awaiting the moment when she could interrogate Azzahra alone — when she could cross her path.

Her thoughts were read by Azzahra, whom they filled with alarm; but, assuming an unconcerned and gay air, she requested Al-Mansour to favour them with one of his tales of the East.

"Gladly will I contribute," he gaily replied, "to alleviate the heart-rending sorrows of our unhappy captive.

"THE INGRATITUDE OF MAN.

"When grass was growing in the public streets of a great Persian city, in a time of famine, war, and pestilence, and when the threshold of the excluding gate of charity was worn with the foreheads of the suppliant poor,

Abdallah, a son of obscurity, was found, naked and emaciated with hunger, among the ruins of a desolate street.

“A worthy merchant of that place, who had been brought to the verge of ruin by the calamities of the State, had not yet shut the eyes of compassion, notwithstanding the innumerable objects of distress that surrounded him on every side ; when he beheld the wretched condition of Abdallah, he was thawed into pitying sympathy for the misfortunes of the youth, whose bones he clothed with the flesh of his bounty, and whom he cherished under the hospitable roof of his mansion.

“To keep his eyes from the slumbers of indolence, and his hands from the bosom of sloth, he employed the young man to cultivate his garden, which was situated at the back of the house, and overlooked by the windows of the Zenana. As he commenced his work one day, he beheld Rosanna, the only child of his patron, throwing her lovely black eyes around, like a timid roe-deer who ventures on the flowery borders of the garden. When she perceived him, she started and withdrew ; but the beating heart of the ungrateful youth became the immediate hunter of her incomparable charms.

“Although he could discover no possible hope of aspiring to gather the fruit of his desires, accident pointed out a path heretofore unex-

plored by the foot of invention. For one day, as he sang at his labour, some dubious expressions that escaped his lips, striking the ear of Rosanna, set the bird curiosity on the wing. Listening, with wondering delight, she heard him thus continue his amorous song :

“ ‘Unfortunate prince that I am ! sad victim of calamity and crime ! Must love add his stings to all my other sorrows, while the maid I am certain never to possess, no more than my lost crown, is in the hands of my enemies ? To reveal my rank were certain death, and my present disguise is such that to aspire to her love would be folly ; yet, if I continue to conceal my wound, of a surety I must expire.’ ”

“ Now this was a song composed by the Prince of Orissa, who about that time having been conquered, and expelled from his hereditary dominions, wandered about in the disguise of a pedler, and was smitten by the charms of a lady whom he had seen in the city of Teheran. As his fame had reached the ears of Rosanna, though they had never been gratified before by hearing the song, it came into her fertile imagination that possibly this might be the unhappy exile.

“ Accordingly, she began to weigh this bubble of creative fancy in the scales of a false hallucination, which confirmed in her judgment that he was an inestimable pearl torn by violence and

misfortune from a lustrous crown. Every grime-stained feature was bright with majesty, every awkward motion expressive of regal state; in short, the imprudent Rosanna, by pursuing the rainbow of imagination, was lost in the desert of inclination, and enveloped in the tempest of love. Too late she called reason to her aid, for now she was the captive of passion, surrounded and led in chains by a troop of fanciful conceits.

“At length she unhappily determined to remove the thin veil of her doubts. One morning she attired herself in all the lustre of dress and adornment, and beckoned with the finger of indiscretion to this amorous youth, who ran in blissful confusion to the window, treading on the air of joyfulness.

“Pointing to an open pomegranate that blushed by the foot of the wall, Rosanna told him that the beauty and ripeness of the fruit had long excited her fancy, and desired him to throw it up. The youth, having plucked the fruit, threw it towards the window; but desirous of prolonging his pleasure, contrived that it should frequently fall back. Rosanna, smiling, told him if he did not throw better for his crown, he might wear a turban for the rest of his days.

“Naturally, he could not comprehend the meaning of these words, and replied, ‘What concern hath your slave with crowns, whose

highest ambition is to serve the Queen of Beauty for ever ?’

“ ‘You were not aware,’ she answered, ‘that I overheard you some days since bewailing in song your misfortunes in losing your kingdom.’

“ A beam of light pierced the soul of Abdallah on hearing this. ‘Fool that I am!’ he exclaimed, starting back as if in despair. ‘What have I done? To remain unknown in misfortune is a blessing; but I owe this unlucky discovery to a babbling, foolish tongue.’

“ Having thus said, he retired in disorder, and peevishly struck his spade into the ground. Forgetful now of his labour, he ransacked every corner of his brain for the means of advancing his design by confirming the happy deception.

“ In the meantime the deluded Rosanna was burning on the coals of anxiety to be let into the particulars of his history, which now she felt well assured would realise her most sanguine expectations.

“ When she opened her casement in the morning, she beheld her lover by the foot of a hedge in a sleeping posture, stretched out supinely on the ground; sometimes he started as in a dream, and sometimes muttered incoherent expressions. At length she heard these intelligible words: ‘Unfortunate Prince of Orissa! Rosanna, the fairest of maids! Oh, maddening love!’

“Profound silence ensued, but fancy added all the rest, and quickly supplied the application ; so that, in short, this simple maid became the dupe of her own imagination, and, without ever applying the touchstone of caution, took the basest of metals for pure gold. In the meantime the poisonous spider fancy, in this flimsy web of delusion, wove palaces, sceptres, and crowns.

“In a few days she laid the plan of an elopement, which she communicated to her imaginary prince, who embraced the project with joy, and soon brought the plot to execution. So that, throwing off the fair veil of reputation, and plunging her parents in unbounded grief, she bound up all her jewels and ornaments, and on a light-footed horse belonging to her father took the way of the desert of despair.

“All night, through unfrequented ways, they pressed forward through the gloomy woods, and that timorous heart, which before would have started at the squeaking of a mouse, now dared, through love, to meet the grim spirits of darkness, or to hear the roar of a lion.

“When this craven-hearted traitor imagined he had eluded the danger of pursuit, he considered the difficulties of concealment, and the danger of his gross imposture coming to light ; so that, instigated by fear, lust, and avarice, he resolved in his dark mind to gratify his infamous

passions by robbing her of her virtue and her wealth.

“These designs on a poor weak deluded damsel, far from the hand of help, seemed already on the threshold of accomplishment. When the morn, in her dun mantle, frowned on his gloomy purpose, he stopped the horse at the foot of a tree, and told her she must alight.

“‘Dear Prince!’ said Rosanna, ‘surely you do not intend to stop here; this is no place of safety; let us proceed to the house of your friend.’

“‘But I do intend to stop here,’ replied he somewhat hastily, for he could not conceal the workings of his foul soul.

“The hapless Rosanna now suspected that this harsh discordant voice was not the voice of love, and a thousand fears in one bitter moment crowded confusedly upon her troubled mind, while thus she vainly continued to importune him :

“‘This is no place of safety, sweet Prince : indeed, they may still pursue us ; my heart beats, I know not why, dear Prince. Oh ! let us go a little farther !’

“‘Not one step,’ said the ruffian, alighting and pulling her by force off the horse. ‘Your fears are groundless ; there is no living creature near us ; and, as for the place, you will find it the most pleasant you ever beheld. What

hinders us from gratifying our mutual wishes? the opportunity is too precious to be lost.'

"Having said this, he began to use freedoms with the lady, who endeavoured to divert him from his purpose by soft and endearing words, to this effect:

" 'You can not mean to hurt me, sweet Prince. Why then do you twist my poor arms so cruelly? You know I am not half so strong as you. Nay, you will hurt me, if you press so hard. Methinks you would not willingly hurt me. Have I not given you my heart? Have I not sacrificed my hopes for your sake? Have I not trusted you with my honour? Good heaven! do not injure my confidence, my love, my life, my virtue. Remember your noble self; remember my generous father. Have pity on my weakness; have pity on my youth; have pity on my tears!'

"When she found the ruffian, like a hungry bear deaf to the voice of his expiring prey, rejoicing in his animal strength, and preparing to glut his brutal appetite, she drew from concealment a poisoned dagger, with the design to bury it in her bosom.

"The villain, observing her intention, seized the weapon in his naked hand, and while attempting to wrest it from her, deservedly received a mortal wound. The powerful poison in a few moments curdled the current of his

flaming blood, so that he expired in frightful tortures, reviling Providence for the prevention of his fiendish design.

“The unfortunate Rosanna now trembled at the yawning gulf from which she had just escaped; but an ocean of trouble raged before her, without the prospect of any shore or haven, or the help of any pilot to direct her in the storm, while thus she bewailed her forlorn condition :

“‘Whither shall I wander? Where shall I search for a refuge from my woes? Who shall wash my fame as pure as my unpolluted thoughts? Oh, Heaven! conduct my steps to where some good matron spins the last thread of life in her lowly cottage; that so, hidden from calumny, I may toil in humble penury, and learn to forget this tempest of my soul?’

“While thus on the thorn of sorrow, like the nightingale, she mourned her fate, she felt her nose-ring to be much bent, and while endeavouring to straighten it, it broke in her hand.

“Immediately the earth trembled around, her eyes were darkened as by a dense veil, and a hoarse voice struck on her terrified ears, saying :

“‘Who endowed thee with that ring which thou hast broken, thus to force me up from the palace of the deep abyss? Speak! what is thy demand, that I may obey the dictates of Heaven?’

“Rosanna, trembling with fear, replied, ‘Sacred Djin, or whatsoever thou art! pardon the ignorance of thine humble slave. The ring which I broke was the gift of a holy Dervish, whom I supported with the hand of charity, when lean famine stalked through the land; but of its powers I was ignorant, though he indeed told me it would relieve me from distress, yet refused to state in what manner. Deign then, powerful spirit, to transport me hence to a place of safety.’

“She was proceeding to implore further favours, but the genius stopped her with the intimation that he had only power to gratify one wish when the ring was broken. In a moment she perceived herself lifted up in the air, and, swift as the flight of imagination, found herself standing safely in another land.

“Here delicious refreshments hung clustering on every tree, and harmony sat warbling on every bough; the smiling spring was busy weaving her flowery carpets, while the infant breezes on their tiny wings fanned her with grateful perfume.

“Now the eyes of Rosanna brightened with pleasure, like pearly dew-drops in the morning rays; but as she moved forward on the light foot of expectation, searching in this earthly paradise for the inhabitants of the blissful region, she was soon bewildered and plunged again into sorrow, on finding no marks of the

hand of cultivation, nor any trace of human foot.

“Here, recollecting the ring, she broke it a second time. Instantly the Djinn appeared again, and demanded the reason of her summons.

“Falling on her face, she cried, ‘Convey me to the house of my father.’ Immediately she fainted away, and when she recovered her senses again she found herself seated on a tombstone.

“The sad reflection now burst upon her mind that she had lost her beloved parent; so, drowning with her tears the lamp that burned on the grave in his memory, she sat in the shades of horror, conscious that her undutiful conduct had brought a virtuous and a loving father to an untimely end.

“In a short time she beheld her mother with a weeping train in the robes of mourning, carrying jars of perfumed oil and baskets of flowers, to strew upon the tomb. So, joining their tears in one copious stream of affliction, she related her sad tale in the ears of astonishment; and in purity of heart led a life of reason from that day forth, deluded no more by vain imaginations.”

“My Zorah is an admirable amateur Rami,” proudly whispered Abou Hassan to Olinda, when Al-Mansour had concluded. “It would gratify her much to recite a story of Oriental life, if this would afford you pleasure.”

Olinda assuring the Kaïd and Zorah how greatly she would enjoy the narration, the bride, after some timorous hesitation, consented.

“Al-Mansour has recounted a tale about the ingratitude of man,” she said : “I will recount a pendant about the ingratitude of woman.

“THE INGRATITUDE OF WOMAN.

“There was once a youth who from the flowers of prosperity drank the dew of happiness, and from the inheritance of his father derived vast possessions. In the exercises of the body and the accomplishments of the mind he was unrivalled amongst his companions, and in valour and comeliness unequalled among his peers. Nor was he less praiseworthy in the extent of his liberality, which gladdened the hearts of his friends and brightened the house of his hospitality.

“One day, as he rode through the city, his ears were struck with the voice of lamentation, and, looking round, he beheld an old hard-hearted usurer, assisted by the guard of the cutwal, or chief magistrate, who dragged a beautiful female from the arms of an aged parent, while the latter invoked heaven and earth to pity the severity of his distress. Touched with compassion at this scene of misery, he stopped and demanded the

cause. He was given to understand that the father of the young lady was indebted thirty thousand rupees to the old shroff, or money-lender, who, having stripped him of all his possessions, was now carrying away the daughter into slavery.

“Noureddin, for such was the name of the youth, having inquired into the particulars, generously discharged the debt, thereby restoring the lady to freedom, the father to joy, and the whole family to the comforts of life.

“But as misfortune is often the food of love to the generous mind, Noureddin, during his visits to the family, was affected by the daughter’s beauty; which, like a meteor in a dark sky, beamed brighter to his admiring eyes till he was led, in pursuit of the fair delusion, into the bottomless pit of distress. When he perceived a due return of his passion, he bound with this fair creature the indissoluble knot of marriage, and pledged to her his heart. So enamoured did he become of his lot, that, like the assiduous bee, he lived but on the flower of her charms, insomuch that rest was inconsistent with one moment’s separation, and content with any pleasure of which she did not partake. His fond devotion anticipated all her wishes, and his heart was the receptacle of her love. Nor was she cold to his passion, or indifferent to his caresses. She returned them with redoubled

ardour, being bound in the chain of his generosity, and caught in the net of his endearments; so that, like a handmaid, she administered to his pleasures, catching the rising wish in the look of his amorous eye.

“Whenever the foot of separation advanced an uncommon step in the ways of worldly business, the bitter gall of sorrow was poured from the cup of anxiety, and the roses of her cheeks were destroyed in a torrent of tears. In short, the love of the happy pair was become the song of the maidens, and the theme of unwearied fame.

“Noureddin had an uncommon fondness for hunting, in which noble exercise he excelled so highly that his spear became the dread of the forest and his arrows the harbingers of death to the beasts of the field. By chance he became acquainted during these expeditions with a young man, brother to the ruler of the city, who often shared with him the spoils of the chase, and drank of the wine of society beneath his hospitable roof.

“One day the glance of this young man fell on Noureddin’s fair lady, and immediately her eyes became fixed on him. Without waiting for further encouragement, this son of wickedness, forgetful of the sacred ties of friendship, permitted the infectious air of desire to fever in his putrid mind. Upon his return home, he called

to his aid one of the age-worn daughters of wickedness, accustomed, like the screech owl of darkness, to ravage the sacred nest of the innocent dove of purity, and to gloat over the ruins of reputation.

“This emissary of iniquity, being bribed by gold, insinuated herself by degrees, with the address and subtlety of Satan, into the acquaintance and confidence of the yet unsuspecting fair one. She began to bait the snares of vice with pleasure, and to spread the bird-lime of ruin over the blooming branches of the tree of bliss. But the shy bird for a long time would not listen to the call of enchantment, and was blind to the lure of deceit. Yet, by degrees, she became enamoured with the treacherous notes, familiar with the objects of danger, and hopped at length into the snare of perdition.

“Thus the soft clay of female composition, unretentive of a grateful or enduring impression, was moulded to the purposes of sin. She consented to sink the fair vessel of her own and her husband’s honour in the black whirlpool of infamy, and to pollute, like a falling flower, the unspotted garments of her perfumed reputation.

“When a few days of dearly purchased pleasure had elapsed, and the story of her broken fame became whispered abroad and began to reverberate from every quarter, like the voice of the ghost of murder, in their affrighted ears, the

guilty pair considered the danger of their situation and dreamed of nothing but the sword of vengeance impending over their wicked heads.

“There now remained no means of retrieving their lost peace of mind, but by swimming across the gulf of wickedness into which they had already so wantonly plunged. They formed a hellish knot of conspiracy, and waited the favour of an opportunity to execute their accursed designs.

“About the dark hour of midnight, when all was prepared for this scheme, the fair fiend arose from the arms of her husband, and embracing her gallant at the door, they set fire to the four corners of the house. Then, mounting upon horses laden with gold, jewels, and precious effects, they made away. When they perceived, as they looked back, that the flames defied the hands of human assistance, they passed on to a distant city where, undisturbed for some time, they enjoyed their criminal pleasures, covered their heads with the ashes of infamy and drank the dregs of the cup of pollution.

“The unfortunate husband, being awakened by the flames and the uproar of the distracted servants, started from the pillow of repose, and, missing his beloved wife, ran in quest of her through the floods of fire, till life, through the excessive pain he suffered, seemed preparing to desert its untenable abode, and his eyes, through

the insufferable heat, to melt in their ivory sockets.

“When the fire had consumed the house, the lady was nowhere to be found, and he concluded, without a shadow of doubt, that she had fallen a victim to the relentless conflagration. Generous and unsuspecting, he was tossed on the waves of distraction, and thus lamented in the bitterness of his heart :

“ ‘Why, O Fate! hast thou spared my life, and robbed me thus of the delight of my soul? better to share her sad fortune than to be left lonely in tears. I feel like some vagrant bird which the storm of a winter night has driven far from shore. I am weary : I flutter in search of land, but I see nothing excepting the wild waves that roll beneath. How long shall this frail nature support the toil of grief? Death should come like a hospitable friend, and invite me to his dark but peaceful abode. Already my blood boils in grief, and soon will the bubble life burst in air. And yet this soul is tenacious of its clay, and still fond of its restless dwelling-place. Why dost thou not stretch thy little wing and fly away, poor flutterer, that art drowning in tribulation? Alas! what shall I do? Fain would I put an end to this wretched existence, but the Holy Prophet forbids me to spill the cup of life : yet my cruel destiny might excuse this breach of the will Divine.’

“Thus mourned the disconsolate husband in the solitary shades of night; but the sun of reason began to dawn with the morning, and he gave orders to search the ruins in order that he might pay the last duty of respect to the remains of his best beloved.

“To Nouredin’s no small astonishment, he perceived that no signs could be traced by the eye, or be produced by inquiry. He was amazed, and by degrees began to suspect that the lamp of truth had not yet enlightened this scene of darkness. Wherefore he went to the house of his friend to communicate to him his surmises, to pour his distress into his bosom, and to receive at his hands the balm of consolation, when he was given to understand that the latter had been absent from home since midnight.

“Now the shadows of former doubts became substantial in reason’s eye, and, from the significant sneers of contempt he witnessed, he concluded with certainty that his false friend had plucked the flower of domestic bliss, and had polluted the fountain of honour. Yet, a dupe still to her deceitful smiles, he could never bring himself to believe that she herself had thrown fire into the edifice of her own reputation, but thought, on the contrary, that she had been seized by the hands of violence in the moment of terror and confusion.

“In this vain persuasion of her purity, he

dressed himself in dust-coloured sackcloth, and disfiguring his body with wood-ashes, he concealed a short sword beneath his garment. Thus equipped, and waving a bunch of peacock feathers in his hand like a begging Fakir, he set out from door to door, and from town to town, to endeavour, if possible, to find out their retreat.

“After much fruitless inquiry, he at last lighted on the track of intelligence, and arrived at the door of their lodging. Here he beheld an old woman, of whom he inquired whether such a lady were at home, to which she unsuspectingly replied that she was. At this news Nouredin was so elated that he burst into tears of joy : so having called the old woman aside, he put a purse of money into her hand, and, conjuring her to be faithful, desired she would acquaint her mistress that her husband was at the door ; and, if she were willing to embrace the opportunity of escape, he was prepared to protect her from the lawless brutality of a thousand villains.

“The old daughter of iniquity promised to whisper it in the ear of secrecy, as she said there was much company in the house. Accordingly, limping away, like a wisp before the wind, she delivered her husband’s message to the lady, who was sitting with her paramour, quaffing the agate-cup of love-inspiring wine.

“She started, as in a dream of terror, and running to the window beheld her impatient

husband walking about in the dress of a dervish with the aspect of pain and distraction. Flying to the side of her gallant, she apprised him of their danger, exclaiming, 'Let us fly! let us fly!' For, while yet the hand of revenge is not twisted in the locks of freedom, of safety there still remains hope.

"The gallant ran, without reply, and ordered two horses to be immediately saddled at the back door. But the husband, having observed the old woman watching him through the balcony, now first suspected the treachery of his wife. The fire of rage gained the ascendant, and rushing into the house like a hungry wolf which invades the defenceless cottage, he searched from place to place, till accidentally falling on the back door, he there saw a lady in a veil mounting a horse in confusion with the aid of two peons, whilst his base friend was prancing upon another beside her.

"Like the lightning that blasts the trees of the forests, the injured Nouredin, with the flaming sword of vengeance, laid the peons on the dust of death; then, flying to the murderer of his honour, would have quenched his revenge in the blood of the traitor, had not the latter saved his life by cowardice, and turned his face to flight.

"Nouredin now hesitated about taking the life of his spouse, but humanity prevailed over anger, and the weakness of a woman who was

in his power proved stronger than an opposing lion.

“Accordingly, having seized the reins, he obliged her to dismount ; and, having purchased new apparel, and provided for his returning journey, he carried her off without a word of reproach, with the intention of restoring her to her parents.

“When he had wound up the long line of his travel, and arrived in the environs of his native city, to avoid the piercing eye of ridicule and the sneers of a calumnious world, he thought proper to halt in a retired grove until the veil of night should conceal the infamous object of his dishonour, and dispatched his servants in advance to prepare the house for his reception.

“While here he reclined in the shade, the thievish spirit of sleep deceived the guards of sense, and, robbing the house of prudence, left open the doors of danger. The lover, who had traced their route, arrived at this unlucky moment and beheld the unfortunate Nouredin sleeping beside the snake of his bosom.

“The opportunity was too precious to be lost ; so drawing a dagger from his side, he advanced like a tiger towards his prey, with an intention to make his sleep eternal in death. The lady awaking, seized his hand, and whispering said it were a pity to give him so easy an exit. ‘Let

us first,' continued she, 'tie him hand and foot with this strong cord, and afterwards consult together the means of his death, when the eyes of revenge shall be gratified.'

"This wicked proposal was approved, and when they had accomplished their design, the hapless Nouredin awoke, when he beheld two hellish fiends combined against his life. Now, when too late, he bitterly repented having spared the wicked woman; 'but what Fate ordains,' said he, 'no mortal can evade.' Exulting in her artifice, this daughter of wickedness threw the end of the rope over a branch of the tree above them, and, calling her lover to her assistance, they hoisted him up like a rope-dancer sporting in the air. Then, sitting down before him with her paramour, she embittered the elements of his life with sharp taunts, drank wine from the cup of hilarity, and displayed her amorous wickedness before his eyes. She then imprinted warm kisses on the trembling lips of the favoured youth, until at last the yeast of tenderness overflowing the vessels of decorum, the unhappy husband became the accursed witness of his own dishonour.

"When the fair fiend arose, she advanced towards him, and, presenting a dagger at his throat, cried, 'Now thou shalt know the extent of a woman's revenge.' But thinking she had not yet sufficiently tormented him, she sat down

again by her lover, with the intention of adding fresh stings to her inveterate malice.

“At length, drunk with passion and wine, they reposed their giddy heads on the pillow of misfortune, and left a cup of wine overflowing by their side on the ground. The unfortunate Nouredin, with a faint glimpse of returning hope, beheld this imprudent conduct, but was not in a state to take just reparation for his wrongs. In the meantime he was alarmed with a new and equally terrible danger.

“Turning up his eyes to heaven, he beheld a prodigious snake moving along the bough to which he was suspended. The snake made directly towards him, and descending slowly by the cord as he glittered in the evening ray, he began to roll his rattling folds around his body, grasping his quivering frame. Then rearing his scaly neck, and brandishing his forked tongue, he began to hiss in the face of the pale wretch who was dried up with consuming horror.

“‘Heaven!’ exclaimed he, ‘what black demon is this darkening the light of life, and melting with fear the corporeal substance? Merciful God! for what unheard-of guilt should the bolts of thy vengeance be so mercilessly hurled against me in this state of probation, as though eternity itself were too short for the punishment of my crimes? External danger excruciates the soul,

but internal care breaks the bitter gall of accumulated misery.

“‘Bite! bite, thou marrow-drying demon! Why dost thou delay to strike with thy poisoned fangs? Let me die! Though I die unrevenged, let me die! let me die! Let me descend, though to a quick and fiery grave, ere I have time to hurl the darts of blasphemy against the impregnable vault of heaven, to revert on mine own head.’

“While he thus spake, the serpent by degrees untwined its glistening coils, and descending to the ground slowly dragged its length along as it approached the sleeping lovers. As it glided over the face of the gallant, the unfortunate man raised his hand to the place, when the snake, apprehensive of danger, seized him by the under lip, and his departing soul, changing his untenable abode, took wings and flew to the world unknown.

“The reptile then, attracted by the fumes of the wine, dipped its head into the cup, and having drank it half out, let fall into the remainder some black drops from its venomous jaws. Then, returning by the way it came, it once again carried terror into the soul of Noureddin, but passed over without harming him, and concealed itself aloft in a hollow of the tree. The heart-broken Noureddin, on beholding this strange and inexplicable work of Providence, was over-

whelmed in a flood of astonishment, but could not pretend to prognosticate the final turn of the still-revolving heavenly wheel.

“At length the lady awoke, and greedily applying the wine-vessel to her lips, drank the dregs of the cup of fate. Then, endeavouring to awake her lover, she perceived he had slept his last; on which she fell headlong from the flowery bank of pleasure where she had so lately sat sporting in love, into the bottomless whirlpool of despair. Without knowing or seeking the cause of his death, revenge became predominant in her malicious soul. She drew the dagger from the belt at his side, ran like a fury to her husband, and pointed its sharp edge to his naked breast.

“The poor husband, deprived of the power of resistance, saw himself in the cruel claws of this demon, and while life yet stood trembling on the threshold of despair, he thus exclaimed:

“‘Oh! my beloved wife! Is it thus you repay my unshaken constancy and inviolable love? Hear one word, I beseech you, and then let my fate be determined.’

“‘Speak then,’ replied she, beginning to hope that she might once again deceive him by her hateful wiles. ‘Speak. What have you to say?’

“The trembling Nouredin, with submissive tones and faltering voice, then continued:

“‘Patience, my beloved one, that I may breathe,’ he said. ‘One moment’s patience, and you shall hear all. Well am I assured that all I have witnessed proves to demonstration that destiny rules the actions of men. Chastity so pure, love so sincere, and perfections so great as thine could never have been blotted from the fair book of reputation by less than the hand of Fate. What then can be said? Since it hath pleased the recording-angel of the unalterable will of Providence to write these harsh sentences of misfortune in the diary of our lives, can we presume to make comment or reply? Assuredly not. What cannot be averted must be endured and forgotten.

“‘Were not the holy Prophets of God given up to the temptations of Satan, that, having passed like gold through the fire, they might shine with redoubled lustre? Shall we then, poor, imperfect blind mortals, dare to repine at the sacred decrees of Heaven? Had this heart been cold to love, susceptible of revenge, hardened against pity, how easily might your fate have been determined. But I spared your life. Subject, as I am, to those tender feelings, can peace ever visit my grave, or death prove a wall of separation between us? No, my restless spirit shall haunt the scene of my former joys, and hover over the spot of your repose.

“‘I now swear by the holy Prophet of immortal

truth that not one hair of those fair ambrosial locks shall be harmed, nor one member of that delicate frame suffer injury, if you untie these hands and set me free. If I have unwarily offended, let my faults be concealed by the skirts of your mercy, and let our former love be restored, and augmented even, by reflecting on past misfortunes. Well is it known that love, when pruned by the hand of adversity, increases in fruitfulness like the vine; and, at the departure of winter, the fragrance of the returning spring-time is more delicate than the sweetness of the whole year.'

"While thus on the excruciating rack of agony the helpless husband temporised with impending fate, the poison began by degrees to inflame the vital organs of the merciless woman, and the spasms of convulsive death to rend her frame, till at length she fell foaming on the ground, and expired in the agonies of well-merited torment.

"While Nouredin was returning thanks to Heaven for interposing the divine hand, his servants returned and unbound him.

"Having related the particulars to the astonished magistrates of the city, they ordered the two wicked lovers to be interred on the scene of their crimes, and the story to be engraven on their tomb.

"From this narration it follows that to be distracted with the beauty of a woman, and to

paint the glowing rainbow of imagination in the cloudy sky of passion, is inconsistent with the dictates of wisdom, for never does the fair flower of the female cheek shed the sweet odours of gratitude. When the Recording-angel was writing down in his book the catalogue of female virtues, a blot from his pen and a tear from his eye fell upon the word 'gratitude.'"

"Fortunate for me I indulged not in such diatribes on the gentle sex," Al-Mansour exclaimed. "The ladies would have attacked me in a chorus of indignation."

A mounted cavalier now galloped to the tent and called out Al-Mansour. After consultation with Abou Hassan, he returned, to announce immediate departure. "We must away hence," he cried out. "The enemy are in hot pursuit."

CHAPTER X.

LIFE IN THE DESERT.

“THESE be no enemies that come down upon us through the Pass,” said Olinda to Azzahra and Zorah, when she found how few in number were the advancing horsemen. “They are but the Chiefs of the Ouled-Mimoum, headed by the Marquis de St. Bertrand, trying to find and rescue me from your profane wicked hands.”

“In our profane wicked hands you must nevertheless remain for the present,” replied they, no little entertained at the pleasantry of their fair captive. “Martial law prevails here, and our commander, Al-Mansour, says you cannot be allowed to leave.”

“But wherefore?” Olinda remonstrated. “Of what advantage can it be to detain me? You must be wearied with me already.”

“Never should I weary of you,” lovingly exclaimed Azzahra, as she embraced with tenderness her new friend, forgetting for the moment she was the dreaded “fair woman”—an embrace

which Olinda returned with equal affection, forgetting for the moment her resolve to maintain an attitude of distant reserve towards the wrecker of Chenoua, until her participation in the intended crime was satisfactorily explained.

"She will soon weary of us, though, and I know the reason why," interposed the precocious Zorah, with a sly twinkle of her pretty black eye. "She wants to see again her would-be lover, the Marquis de St. Bertrand. And so should I, were he my lover; he is a delicious being."

That these two Moslem women should know Raoul astonished Olinda greatly, but she was unprepared for the mortification that was coming.

"If he had made love to me instead of to Azzahra, I would not have repulsed him in the rude way she did," Zorah rattled on in her childish prattle. "Fancy, he wanted to put his arm round her waist and kiss her, but the silly creature would not allow him. I did not waste my time with his friend like that, though he was not half so captivating. But the grand climax was the way she got rid of his troublesome importunities by declaring he was her brother," she continued, bursting into merry peals of laughter at the recollection. "Was not that a splendid device for hedging round her virtue?"

These confessions opened up a new train of reflections in the mind of Olinda, causing her to

regard St. Bertrand in a far different light from hitherto. But seeing the giddiness and levity of the bride, she inquired of Azzahra whether these things were so. On receiving confirmation from the lips of the deeply blushing Arab, she gently kissed her, telling how she honoured and prized her for her goodness and virtue.

"Azzahra is too devoted to her Christian to think of another, so you need not set such store by her prudishness," Zorah remarked snappishly, for she was irritated at the indirect slight offered to herself for permitting liberties from Pécoul that Azzahra was lauded for rejecting from his comrade.

The warm attachment that had sprung up between Azzahra and her fair path-crosser increased so much from day to day, as they journeyed far away over the bleak regions of the Sahara, that they scarce ever remained apart. Oft was Olinda on the point of alluding to the wreck and the wreckers, but she remembered the priceless boon conferred in saving her from untold horrors, and shrank from wounding the feelings of her gentle and sensitive friend.

As Olinda longed to question the Arab about her cousin, Henry Wilton, so likewise Azzahra longed to question her European companion about her brother, St. Bertrand, but above all to discover whether this fair woman was a rival in the affections of her lover. Both, however,

shrank, as yet, from breaking the ice; one fearing to offend a hostess, and the other a guest.

To refute Zorah's assertion, however, that Raoul was her lover, and to demonstrate that the disclosures she had heard gave no pain, Olinda volunteered to explain that although she and the hussar were on terms of intimacy, their friendship was altogether of an unromantic and Platonic nature, induced by similarity of disposition and by devotion to the same pursuits.

This was too much for the irrepressible impulsive child of nature, who lost all command over herself, and became convulsed with immoderate laughter, in spite of all Azzahra's efforts to check her rudeness to their guest.

"Oh, you have discovered a glorious contrivance for circumventing troublesome, inquisitive husbands, but mine is too clever to be so easily cajoled," she continued, her merriment unabated. "What a towering fury would seize on the soul of Abou-Hassan were he to catch me practising such ingenious devices! and what a tempest of blows would fall upon my devoted shoulders!"

"You would have come in for a good share of that had you been caught at the Baths of Hammam R'rira," retorted Azzahra, trying to stop her provoking volubility, and not remembering on what delicate ground she was treading by that allusion to the region of the wreck.

"The Baths of Hammam R'rira?" echoed

Olinda, reflecting thoughtfully. "Surely they are close to the headlands of Chenoua?"

Perceiving dismay stamped on the features of her companions, however, as she looked for a reply, she pressed the subject no further, well knowing in Azzahra's case already the cause that inspired these apprehensions.

How Azzahra longed that the heedless babbling bride would cease, who was dragging her down into the mire, as well as stumbling into it herself. She perpetually dreaded that her secrets might ooze out, and that she should suffer disgrace before the European, unconscious that already Olinda knew all through having recognised Kredoudja. But her fears of earning the scorn and reproaches of the fair woman were groundless. Love for Azzahra, respect for her proud noble nature and virtuous disposition, as well as admiration of her talents and accomplishments, were taking such hold of Olinda's mind, that she learned rapidly to palliate and even overlook the faults of this simple Child of the Desert.

So strong had grown her belief in Azzahra's innocence of crime, and so firm had become the footing of intimacy between the two, that she no longer could keep silence nor practise deception, confessing how she remembered to have noticed Kredoudja attendant on an Arab veiled lady in the Marengo Garden. "That Arab lady

I have in this way discovered to be her whom my cousin so deeply loves," she added, with a fond smile, putting her arm round her friend, who became covered with mantling blushes at hearing the declaration that Henry loved her so greatly, and also at reflecting that Olinda must know her now to be the same who accompanied the Chenoua wreckers.

All doubts on this point were soon set at rest. Still pressing the shame-stricken girl to her side, Olinda gently sought an explanation of the mystery, asking how a delicately minded woman could bring herself to countenance such scenes with her presence. Great was her joy when Azzahra assured her with bitter tears of contrition that a foolish craving for excitement, after the uneventful life of seclusion she had led from early childhood, alone induced her in a moment of thoughtlessness to hasten down to the shore, little anticipating the frightful crimes that were so near perpetration. "Had I not been there you would have lost your cousin," she concluded, in extenuation.

"And you your lover," rejoined Olinda, smiling, and once more giving her an embrace of affection.

This condonation of her offence and Henry being acknowledged as her lover by the Christian without semblance of jealous feeling, brought soothing unction to Azzahra's troubled spirit,

who began to cherish a belief that the prophesied dangers of path-crossing by the fair woman had vanished away in the mists of the past.

Sweet is hope! It pours comforting balm on the faint sinking heart; it imparts courage and strength to battle on along the dreary wastes and through the storms and buffeting waves of life. But how oft, alas, is hope deceptive! How oft, *ignis-fatuus*-like, does it lead the weary traveller on in search of promised joys, never to be reached!

During their fatiguing wanderings amongst the wild Nomad Tribes of the Desert, who joyfully received as guests the Khalifa of Si Sala and his friends, they chanced to come across one of the rock inscriptions that have puzzled antiquarian explorers of the Desert, in which are represented elephants, warriors wearing plumes on their heads and armed with bows and arrows, and other characteristics of some prehistoric race whose origin has been lost in the haze of antiquity, but who probably were immigrants from the far lands of the East. These deeply interesting vestiges of the past Olinda lost no time in sketching, and was agreeably surprised to find Azzahra engaged in the same pursuit, whose drawing proved as accurate as her own, although not so highly finished.

"My dear child!" she exclaimed in admiration, "you are gifted with wonderful talent.

An admirable musician, as evinced by the delightful songs with which you charm us, it now turns out that you are an artist as well. Are you not dreadfully vain and conceited? Do you not glory in the power and triumph imparted by the possession of genius?"

To the simple home-bred mind of the Arab such thoughts were new, and she failed to comprehend their significance.

"On the contrary, I dread their proving a bitter curse," she mournfully replied, "if my life is to be a sojourn among mine own people, whose gross natures spurn these refined acquisitions."

"Ah! that little 'if' implies a good deal," said Olinda good-humouredly. "Supposing your visions to be realised, and that you wedded one who could appreciate these priceless qualities, would you then look on them as a curse?"

"I would look on them as a snare and a source of danger," she answered, abashed at Olinda's allusions to her union with Wilton, sure to lead her into the great vortex of European life. "Kredoudja ever preaches this in mine ear, and she is right. Still these recreations afford constant occupation and enjoyment, wherefore I pursue them; yet would I willingly relinquish all to-morrow, sooner than mortify by foolish vanity or assumption of superiority those around ungifted with like accomplishments."

Here was a lesson in humility and a rebuff, little expected by Olinda. This Desert Child, so lately the object of scorn, and this despised Black, opening her eyes to the truth and showing her the error of her ways! In the mirror they held up she could distinctly perceive her shortcomings and misdoings. How often, alas! by vanity and self-sufficiency had she wounded the feelings of others! how irretrievably had she, perhaps, wrecked her happiness in spurning the devoted fondness of her brave noble cousin! how contemptible, how ridiculous must she have appeared by reason of her arrogance and exclusiveness!

Then she began to ponder over her relations with the Marquis St. Bertrand, the outcome of this vanity and talent-worship for which she was taken so severely to task. Whither was their attachment leading, Platonic though it might be? and what faith could she henceforward repose in the honour or moral principles of one so justly repulsed by Azzahra when wanting to enact the part of a libertine. Yet these liberties, which Azzahra's purity caused her to resent, she in her folly and unthinking trust had allowed! Oh! into what unseen dangers had she nearly fallen! into what fathomless abysses had she nearly plunged, in blindly overestimating the supposed mental perfections of herself and this guileful deceiver!

All lay spread out before her as on a map ; and burying her face in her hands she wept the tears of shame and repentance. Into her sorrowing mind these heartburning reflections let pour a fresh flood of light, causing her to comprehend with amazement that the specious Usurper, Platonic affection, had been dethroned in disgrace, and that Love, the legitimate Monarch, reigned instead. The angry jealous resentment that burned in her breast at St. Bertrand's attempted freedoms with Azzahra told her this tale, and removed the film from before her eyes. Did she not love, she reasoned, why should she become jealous ? The mortification she suffered from Raoul's marked neglect of late towards herself, the remembrance of the unmingled pleasure she derived from his presence, and the loneliness she experienced in his absence, imparted irresistible confirmation to this startling secret which had burst upon her so unexpectedly.

Viewing Raoul's conduct in this fresh flood of light, she soon learned to extenuate and pardon his reprehensible levity at Hammam R'rira.

The fire of her newly discovered love rapidly swallowed up and extinguished the anger that so lately incensed her. Weepingly she laid the whole blame at her own door, believing in her besotted folly that by her cruel coldness, and by refusing his offers of marriage, she had driven St. Bertrand from her into pitfalls and tempta-

tions. Had she reciprocated his devotedness, she argued with blind infatuation, he would have remained true as steel.

The faults of those she loves woman must either condone or revenge. No middle course she knows. Into one extreme or the other must she rush.

Buoyed up thus with false hopes and led astray by vain imaginations, Olinda no longer bewailed having permitted, without remonstrance, the demonstrative proofs of attachment she had before contemplated in shame and confusion. Contrariwise, she sighed for Raoul to come again, to renew his homage, to pour once more the healing balm of praise and adoration into her wounded disconsolate heart.

What a change had been wrought by the unconscious denunciations of Azzahra, which had opened the eyes of Olinda's understanding and taught her to know herself! What a bewildering revolution! Now could Olinda plainly see into what labyrinths of trouble she had strayed in the frenzied pursuit after genius, held up for the first time before her eyes in its true colours by the simplicity of this Arab maiden: she could see the false love of notoriety that had won her, and the foes she had thereby made: she could see the old love she had lost; she could see the new love she had won: she could see the conflicting entanglements that beset her

on every side through this new passion of hers that had come to light, forcing on a decision whether she should accept the Frenchman as a suitor or break free from him altogether. Herein lay her difficulty. That her friends would offer determined resistance to the union, even should she decide to marry Raoul, she well knew; yet the ordeal of parting was terrible to contemplate. He was so kind, so gentle, so good, so fond, could she ever make the sacrifice?

What was he doing? she wondered. Was he thinking of her? Was he scouring the Sahara, to search for her and restore her to freedom? She doubted it not, nor did she doubt his despair and alarm at her being so rudely and mysteriously snatched from his side.

She sighed to gaze on his handsome, winsome face, to hear the soft soothing accents of his voice, to watch the tender glances steal from his large lustrous eyes. She sighed to behold him charging at the head of his resistless dragoons, to announce her release from captivity.

In this latter sentiment Azzahra could not sympathize, for to her the hour of separation from her loved fair woman was fraught with sorrowful reflections. Olinda's unconcealed anxiety to depart from her caused deep grief and mortification likewise to the affectionate Arab.

"Why seek to leave?" she sorrowfully remon-

strated. "All in my power I do to initiate you in the enjoyments of our wild Desert life, and to make you contented. In short," added Azzahra with a smile, "I try hard to alleviate the miseries of your cruel captivity."

"Well you succeed in promoting my enjoyment, dear Azzahra," her friend responded. "Almost you persuade me to be a Child of the Desert like yourself."

At length Al-Mansour ordered a halt, explaining to Olinda that he had reached the rendezvous towards which his commander had ordered him to fall back, and that Si Sala himself might be expected to join them shortly, could he succeed in eluding the pursuit of the flying column dispatched against him from Tlemcen.

For Olinda's entertainment a field-day of the wild horsemen of the Desert was held, including the great tribe of the Ouled-Naïl, whose territories they had reached.

Near the top of a bare hillside Al-Mansour and his guests took up their position, to view the march past, the Agha of the Ouled-Naïl and Abou Hassan drawing up the mounted bands they commanded in dense masses beneath, each squadron marshalled by its own chief and having a standard borne at its head, embroidered in gold with Mahometan religious devices. On a signal given the whole force advanced at walking pace till in front of the commander, where,

after saluting, they raised a loud shout, unslung their long matchlocks and cantered away to the farther side of the hill. Then wheeling, they plunged their enormous rowels into the sides of their snorting chargers, and, wildly waving their guns, galloped back at full speed, shouting more wildly than before. As they passed the saluting-point they discharged their weapons in the air, and then slinging them behind their backs, brandished their drawn scimitars above their heads. After this order came to an end, the warriors galloping about, yelling and flourishing their swords in unintelligible confusion. Then commenced the races, the hand-to-hand engagements, the trials of strength, and the various games in which these Nomads of the Desert delight and excel.

The agility of these hardy horsemen surprised Olinda and her companions. Many of them would drop their weapons and wheeling round at full speed recover them from off the ground as they passed, without checking the pace of their steeds, hanging by one foot and one hand to the high peaks of their saddles and bounding back into their seats with no apparent effort.

The fair spectators warmly applauded the courage of a brave boy, son to one of the Kaïds, who got repeatedly unhorsed in the *mêlée*, but who each time gallantly remounted.

Azzahra reminding Al-Mansour of his promise

to show them desert hawking, a day was fixed for accompanying the Agha of the Ouled-Nail to chase the bustard and the gazelle with his great Sakk'r falcons. None of the party had ever seen this sport, so the day was awaited with lively interest.

The first hawk was let fly at a Houbara bustard, and after a long flight pressed the quarry so close that it descended to ground, running along the ground at a pace that the Arab coursers ridden by the hunting party could barely keep up with. Its pursuer again overtaking it and preparing to swoop down, the bustard discharged from its mouth a jet of shiny fluid which be-daubed the plumage of its enemy, impeding its flight so as to incapacitate it from further pursuit. The next hawk, however, was better trained, keeping just out of range until he had exhausted the bustard's reservoir of fluid, who then became an easy prey.

Azzahra was so preoccupied watching the chase, that, like Catherine de Medici when out hawking, she stumbled and fell prostrate upon her face, having put her foot into the burrow of a jerboa.

The Agha now led the way from the plains to the hilly country frequented by gazelles. Here, after some successful hunts, one unfortunate Sakk'r falcon got impaled on the horns of its quarry, the animal purposely throwing

back its head just as the bird was in the act of striking.

"An ostrich hunt you will enjoy still more," said Al-Mansour in reply to Olinda's expressions of satisfaction at the result of the expedition, "but remember it is far harder work than this. Riding down an ostrich is a serious undertaking."

"You forget that Azzahra has made me a Child of the Desert," she answered, laughing. "No fatigues nor dangers appal me."

"Bravely spoken," he exclaimed. "As for Azzahra and Zorah, they are by birth Children of the Desert, who should feel as much at home in the saddle as on the carpet. But deceive not yourselves. Long will it take to reach the sandy haunts of the ostrich and to return. The time we can spare, but the fatigue will be severe."

"As long as our horses can hold out, we can hold out too," all confidently exclaimed.

"My dear friends," he replied with a smile, "so great is the fatigue, so furious and so prolonged is the pace, that your horses would be unequal to the task. Others we must get from the Beni M'Zab, trained for the purpose, whose wind has been strengthened by abstinence from water, and by a diet of dry dates."

At the hunting-ground, fastening small skins of water to the saddle girths, and strapping to

their saddles a scanty supply of food for four days, they plunged into the ocean of sand, mounted on the horses of the M'Zabites. The first and second days were unpropitious. Ostriches were seen, after which the three girls wanted to start off in pursuit along with a couple of horsemen who were dispatched to drive the birds. But Al-Mansour and Abou Hassan called them back, telling them, with much merriment at their abortive zeal, that they were acting in open defiance of the rules of ostrich hunting.

"These men are sent forward at a gentle gallop," said Al-Mansour in explanation, "to keep the birds only just in sight, without alarming or driving them to full speed, when they would soon be lost to view. As the habit of the ostrich, when thus gently pressed, is to run round in a circle, we shall leisurely start off at right angles to the course they are now following, and if fortunate intercept them, as they charge past.

Al-Mansour then led the way to a distant eminence, hoping to obtain a view of the returning flock, but, though for weary hours they waited in expectation, none appeared. On these occasions Zorah's exciting tales of Eastern life, Azzahra's wild native melodies, and Olinda's Italian airs and English ballads whiled away the time which else would have hung so heavily.

They were greatly disappointed, however, at their continued failures, and rallied Al-Mansour on his prognostications of helpless exhaustion.

"Be slow to give judgment, or confusion will overtake thee," he sagely remarked.

And rightly he advised, for the third day, urged on by their scouts, a flock of six birds, the greatest number that congregate together in Northern Africa by reason of the scarcity of food, passed within easy reach of where they were posted.

"Now you will have to do your best," exclaimed Al-Mansour to his female companions, "to keep up with game that can take a stride at full speed of from twenty-two to twenty-eight feet."

Away all dashed at headlong pace, Olinda and Azzahra keeping side by side; who, after a long and exciting pursuit, in which their horses were nearly exhausted, had the delight of overtaking a fine male bird and making him their captive.

"You have so signally distinguished yourselves," said Al-Mansour, turning to the two fortunate huntresses, "that we need remain no longer. We must with all speed return to the place of rendezvous, lest our presence should be required."

On their way they met a convoy of white dromedaries, on which men were mounted whose

faces were concealed by black veils that descended from their large turbans.

"These are the terrible Touaregs, the robber tribe of the Desert," whispered Al-Mansour, "whose pirate city lies far away in the mountains to the south of the Sahara, and into which stranger foot has never entered.

"Fear not," he added, seeing Olinda alarmed. "They are our allies."

Olinda thought that having such allies redounded not to the reputation of her companions, and again sorrowfully regretted that her beloved Azzahra should be doomed to live amongst such a vile, lawless race.

CHAPTER XI.

RESCUED FROM THE RESCUERS.

A GREAT surprise awaited the hunters at the rendezvous. On their return they found that the Ouled-Mimoum had tracked them down, and had arrived in camp with the Europeans under their protection.

To Olinda this was welcome intelligence, though surprised and wounded that neither her cousin nor her lover had come with the rescuers. Her enjoyment had doubtless been unbounded, wandering over the vast plains and through the smiling palm-groves of the Desert with her talented, accomplished, and prized Arab; yet did she ever pine in secret for the sweets of freedom, dreading to fall captive into the hands of the redoubtable and unprincipled Si Sala.

But the happiness of the loving Azzahra received a rude death-blow at the thought of losing one she treasured so dearly and trusted with such deep implicit reliance. The fair European, alas! would hasten away to distant

lands, and her dear face would be blotted out from sight for ever.

"Her face I shall see no more," sobbed the warm-hearted Desert Child in her simple faith, mournfully shaking her head with harrowing despair.

Happy for her had she never seen that fair face again! When next she saw it, what dire misfortunes had burst around her trembling head.

Over Henry's absence Azzahra mourned in silent sadness, as well as over the coming separation from her friend. That he would have followed first on the track of the abductors to rescue and revenge, she had fondly imagined, and had dreamed delicious dreams of the hour they should meet in sweet communion. Now the hoped-for cup of bliss was ruthlessly dashed from her lips. Black, chilling darkness, she exclaimed, was closing her around. Alas! how far more deadly would be the black chilling darkness so near at hand!

Joyful were the three rescuers at the sight of Olinda, and at finding that their long and arduous pursuit, guided by the trusty Ouled-Mimoum, had not been in vain.

Soon as Frederick's salutations of his sister were concluded—warm salutations of affection which they were haplessly precluded from repeating, Edwardes and Johnson tendered to

Olinda their hearty congratulations at her wondrous escape.

"How you got free," exclaimed Edwardes, "none can understand. Four scowling ruffians—the same, we believe, who seized you and who our escort insist are the mock Spahis that so seriously disturbed our equanimity in camp—we passed as they returned through the Tessala gorge; but how came they to surrender you and restore you your liberty, after perpetrating such a daring crime?"

"Alas! my liberty has not been restored," replied Olinda with mock solemnity. "In the hands of this wicked tyrant Amazon I am still a trembling captive."

She then recounted her adventures, and, throwing her arms round Azzahra, gratefully described how she had been saved through the heroism of the noble girl.

"But for her and dear Zorah," concluded Olinda, "escape from the merciless miscreants would have been impossible, and I should have been dragged far away from all I love, whither none can tell."

"Give Kredoudja her meed of praise too," interposed Azzahra, seeing the Black's wounded look at this forgetfulness of her valiant deeds. "Bravely and skilfully she aided in the attack."

"Her distinguished services merit all praise," replied Olinda in a playful tone, kindly regard-

ing the Soudanese. "My thoughts were too exclusively preoccupied about the gallant Commander to remember my deep obligations to her faithful and deserving Lieutenant."

Seeing the gentlemen's surprise that the lawless horsemen of the Desert should submit to the orders of a woman, Olinda laughed while she explained that Si Sala, before starting away for the West, to meet the flying column of his enemies, had given powers of command to his romantic, adventure-seeking child, under the supervision and care of the trusty and prudent Al-Mansour.

"The Child of the Desert," she gaily added, "all are bound to honour and obey."

"I heard you say none could tell whither you were being dragged through the mountains," said Edwardes to Olinda, after coinciding with a smile in her declaration that the Desert Child claimed all duty and allegiance, "but there seems little doubt that you were in the hands of emissaries employed by our late entertainer, the Marquis de St. Bertrand, who were leading you off to deliver you into his hands."

"Oh! how could that be?" she replied incredulously and rather angrily. "It is unkind to make accusations like that which are incapable of proof. Far from being delivered into his hands, was I not going straight away from the Marquis? and when in tears I implored of my

captors to take me into his presence, they laughed me to scorn."

"But you told us they promised nevertheless to conduct you to where you would have your wishes for meeting him gratified," interposed Azzahra.

"No doubt at some lonely haunt in the Desert," added Johnson. "My dear lady, what you cannot see is plain to us—so plain that we consider no chastisement too summary for such cowardly, unprincipled villainy."

"You have no right so to speak," Olinda replied. "That a polished, refined gentleman in his position could be guilty of the base conduct you impute, I never shall believe."

"Why joined he not in following your track, if he be innocent," retorted the American, "instead of throwing obstacles in the way? But for the Khalifa of the Ouled-Mimoum, we should never have found you. While returning with him to Tlemcen to procure a cavalry escort, you would have got far out of reach."

On learning that the gallant Frenchman did intend coming in pursuit with his hussars, she pronounced that to be a full and satisfactory refutation of the harsh, calumnious aspersions cast upon his honour; she applauded his prudence, tact, and friendly zeal, which she regretted had not been better appreciated.

In vain were the many suspicious circum-

stances they had witnessed brought to mind by her friends, above all his evident intimacy with the four men who were beyond doubt the culprits. To the voice of reason she refused to hearken.

That her mad passion for St. Bertrand should induce her to display such rudeness and such want of gratitude to the generous friends who had accompanied him to seek for her sorely pained her brother, but they besought him to take no heed, for such blind reliance on St. Bertrand possessed her, and so fascinated was she by his crafty allurements, that this violent partizanship and championship of her favourite by the self-opinionated girl was but what they already anticipated.

Notwithstanding, Frederick did embrace an opportunity of chiding Olinda for her want of consideration, and the thankless way she had spoken of their dangerous and arduous undertaking.

"We have succeeded in discovering you," he urged, "while this man you so highly extol has failed signally, supposing him to have made the attempt, which I gravely doubt unless coerced by Henry's presence and pressure. Yet does his failure find more favour in your eyes than our success."

Though irritated at being rebuked and lectured, the protest of her young brother caused

Olinda to see now how wrongly she had acted, and to blush at her thanklessness for the noble and disinterested exertions undertaken on her behalf. These exertions, owing to the kind and affectionate hands into which she had fallen, were not appreciated at their proper value until she now reflected on how vitally important they would have been in averting dread calamities, had her first captors continued to hold her as their prisoner.

Wherefore, in her winning and engaging way, she sought Edwardes and Johnson and made humble submission. She warmly assured them that their priceless services in her cause could never be effaced from her memory, and that to them her heart would ever feel deeply grateful.

"But you should not have been so virulent against the Marquis de St. Bertrand," she added with a glowing blush, "after the great kindness he has lavished upon us all. Can you not see the improbability—nay, the impossibility—of his being actuated by the foul motives you represent?"

"Well, my dear young lady," said Edwardes affectionately, taking in his the offered hand of reconciliation, "let us discuss this painful subject no further. Sufficient for us that our toils are rewarded by finding you unharmed."

"But how about this question of captivity?" inquired Edwardes, turning to Al-Mansour and

Abou Hassan. "It surely cannot be true that you intend to detain this lady in durance vile?"

"Such was my intention," answered the former, "for I wished to refer so important a matter as the release of a prisoner to my chief, Si Sala; but I learn that thy beloved friend, the Khalifa of the Ouled-Mimoum, has had accusations cast in his teeth of aiding and abetting in this abduction by those who knew more about the crime than himself, and he has sent to implore of me to clear him of this most unjust reproach by setting free my charming captive. For the sake, then, of my dear brother, I will take on myself the responsibility of restoring to you your lost treasure if, at the end of one moon's quarter, my commander fails to arrive."

At this announcement joy reigned over the faces of all, except the tender, sorrowing Azzahra, who regarded with blank dismay the departure of her adored fair woman. Still for a whole week Olinda would be hers. Meanwhile what blessings might be in store, should her adored European overtake them!

After the hardships and fatigues the whole camp had undergone, Al-Mansour ordered a few days' halt, to Azzahra's intense satisfaction, who saw thereby fresh chances of finding her Christian lover.

Al-Mansour's politeness to his guests, and his efforts to make their time pass agreeably, were

unbounded. Excursions to the surrounding oases, to the source of the Chelif in the Djebel Amour, and among the untamed nomads of the Saharian Plains, filled up the swiftly gliding days; while their evenings were devoted to music and to narratives of romance in the East, Al-Mansour filling ably the post of chief Rami.

During their wanderings, many desert tribes, migrating in search of fresh pastures, passed them on the way: their coming was heralded far off by the camels, which appeared on the distant horizon like ships in full sail; many carrying upon their backs large semi-circular canopies, like tents, in which were stowed away the women and children of the tribe. Some of these tents, belonging no doubt to some extra jealous Sheik, were enclosed with curtains, in each of which two women and three or four young children had room to travel comfortably, concealed from vulgar gaze; but most of the patriarchs encountered were men of more enlarged and more liberal minds, who permitted their women to dispense with the hideous and abhorred *yashmak*, and even to ride astride on camels and mules.

Invariably the Sheik rode in advance, followed by his headmen and the *belles* of his harem; after whom came the rabble rout in charge of the baggage-camels laden with tents, household chattels, and provisions; the shepherds with the

immense flocks of sheep and goats bringing up the rear.

The conversation one evening, outside the door of their tent, turning upon poetry, Olinda inquired of Johnson whether he admired the art.

The American, assuring her in reply that poetry was a study to which he was passionately devoted, she expressed great satisfaction, observing that in her estimation every one of cultivated taste must have a fondness for the art.

"Many there are who do not write poetry," she added, "who yet think and speak as poets; who love the beautiful and the sublime; who love Nature and Nature's God."

"Still the hard world prizes them not—yea, thinks them wild, untamed, romantic visionaries," he responded.

"The works of our Poet Laureate I admire most," she resumed, "and the 'Idylls of the King' above all. How touchingly the poet has drawn Arthur's parting from his fallen queen," continued Olinda, a glow of enthusiasm lighting up her lovely, intellectual features. "Can language be more beautiful, more pathetic, more affecting, than where the king tells Guinevere he loves her still, while he bids her farewell for ever in this world, though trusting to meet her again, purified from guilt, in the world to come?"

"Fine passage, indeed, very," he replied.

"For my part, though, I like Longfellow best. I reckon none touch him. Why I could sit all day and read Longfellow."

"Longfellow is a poet of whom the Americans may justly feel proud," answered Olinda, with a polite smile, "and so is Bryant."

"Ah! I am glad you admire Bryant."

"His poems are charming. Many of them perfect gems."

"You seem a devoted enthusiast about poetry, Miss Somerton!" exclaimed Johnson. "I should not be surprised to find you were a bit of a poet yourself. I think I have some recollection of certain verses, and very beautiful verses too, about the setting sun, which we heard on board the Atlanta, he added, with an arch smile at Olinda, "as well as the pretty words of several ballads with which we have been favoured."

"I have composed some poems lately on a new system," said Olinda, in response to Johnson, and blushing with pleasure, "borrowed from the sagas of the Icelandic scalds, in which the rhyme is at the commencement of the lines instead of at the end, as with us. But I have combined both plans, making the verses rhyme at the beginning as well as at the end."

"Indeed? Then you must kindly favour me with a specimen of your novel invention!" he exclaimed, much interested.

"Unfortunately, none of my manuscripts are

with me," she replied, "but I will endeavour to recite from memory."

A PRAYER.

Bend, O Lord ! Thy favouring ear ;
Send Thy Spirit to be near ;
Reach to me Thy saving hand ;
Teach me Thy divine command.
Bruise not Thou mine heart within ;
Loose the crushing bonds of sin.
While I breathe on earth below,
Smile and soothe my days of woe ;
Lead me up to acts of good ;
Feed me with Thy heavenly food.
Tear the sting from out my heart ;
Bear me safe from Satan's dart.
Make me serve Thee, true and fast ;
Take me to Thyself at last.

After receiving the praises of her hearers, "I will repeat to you another," she said, with a warm smile of gratification, "which I hope you will like also."

THE CALL TO ARMS.

Sound the trumpet, echoing loud,
Round the glittering martial crowd,
Ringing far with welcome bray,
Flinging summons to the fray.
Wave the fluttering banner high,
Brave and dazzling, in the sky.
Tell the warriors, one and all,
Well to keep their flag, or fall !
Where the battle rages loudest,
There must they be found the proudest,
Fighting for their country's fame,
Righting her deep wrongs and shame.

Bid them, victors, scour the plain,
 'Mid the carnage of the slain,
 Sweep the foemen far away,
 Keep the field, and win the day.

Glory then around their head,
 Gory with the blood they shed,
 Ever shall proclaim their name ;
 Never shall they part from fame.

“Capital, Miss Somerton!” Johnson exclaimed,
 delighted. “Do let us hear one more.”

THE CYPRESS WREATH.

I.

Twine for me a cypress wreath ;
 Mine is sadness—anguish—death.
 Ever woe must be my lot ;
 Never may a brightening spot
 Gleam above my sorrowing head—
 Dream of bliss for ever fled !

Leave me to my fate—to death :
 Weave for me a cypress wreath.

II.

All the friends, beloved so long,
 Fall around—a ghastly throng,
 Weaving grief for those that mourn,
 Leaving me alone, forlorn.
 Their loved voices, bright and dear,
 Ne'er shall greet again mine ear.

Make a mourning wreath for me :
 Take it from the cypress tree.

III.

When my heart o'erflows with grief,
 Then I fondly seek relief,
 Dwelling on the loved ones gone,
 Telling of the raptures flown,

Thinking of the mourned-for dead,
 Drinking in the words they said.
 Go to yonder cypress tree :
 Oh ! bind up a wreath for me.

IV.

Those who from mine arms have fled
 Woes have numbered with the dead ;
 'Neath the cold sepulchral stone,
 Death retains them for his own .
 Sad and weary on I stray,
 Glad, I'll hail the last dark day.
 Twine for me the cypress leaf.
 Mine is bitter, endless grief.

V.

Soon descending to the tomb—
 Boon for mourner steeped in gloom—
 I shall rest, in hope to rise
 High to mansions in the skies,
 There to mingle with the blessed
 Where the weary are at rest.
 Twine for me a cypress wreath.
 Mine is anguish. Welcome death!

VI.

Life is now a desert wide ;
 Strife is vain against the tide.
 Where my dreary wanderings end,
 Dare I hope to find a friend ?
 Yes. I trust to meet with one :
 Bless my God, He'll send His Son.
 Grace and mercy I shall see.
 Place a glorious crown on me.

VII.

Strew no blossoms on my grave,
 You who love me still, I crave ;
 Kind and true unto the death,
 Bind for me my cypress wreath.

Oh ! bid tears, in pity shed,
Flow above the mouldering dead.

Leave me to my fate with death.
Weave for me my cypress wreath.

"You deserve immense praise, Miss Somerton, for this charming discovery," the American exclaimed. "What a pity now that Longfellow, our poet, had not thought of it first."

"Or Tennyson," she said archly, in reply.

"You can string verses well, I declare," he went on, unheeding her little repartee. "You should come to my country : that's the place for grand scenery. You may believe me, you would find lots to describe ; everything is on a gigantic scale over there ; even the robins are as big as your thrushes."

"It would give me great pleasure to visit America," she said. "It must be a magnificent country."

"Ay, and I can tell you more," he added, "it is going to be the great country of the future, destined to eclipse every nation in the world."

"I can scarcely go so far as to agree with you in that," returned Olinda. "However, I trust that, happen what may, America and England will always continue upon friendly terms."

"In that sentiment I cordially concur," returned Johnson with warmth. "We talk big against you sometimes, just to gain the Irish votes at election times ; but, bless your heart,

there is, and always will be, a strong under-current of love and respect for 'the old country,' all the same ; we are all right proud of her, I can tell you."

"I fully believe such to be the case," Olinda added. "Now that all causes of ill-feeling and jealousy have happily been removed from between the two nations, what should hinder their flourishing side by side in friendly rivalry, cultivating the blessings of peace and prosperity, and remembering that both have sprung from the same race? that both are the same flesh and blood?"

Edwardes was not slow in discovering Roman ruins in the vicinity of their camp, to which he eagerly led the way.

"I thought he would be up to this work!" exclaimed Johnson, as they started on one of their exploring parties. "He is 'death' on ruins, as we say in America."

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT CAME OF HIS COMING.

“HE is coming,” screamed Azzahra with delight, as she ran inside the marquee to summon forth Olinda. “See where he and his escort of French Dragoons wind wearily up the hill.”

Her eyes, worn with watchings, were gladdened at last by gazing on the long-coveted object. In a few minutes Henry would stand beside her.

Yet her joy was tempered with fear. The recollection of that terrible scene at the wreck of the yacht made her tremble. Would he again receive her with love, as on the heights of the Sahel? or would he regard her with aversion, as the accomplice and companion of criminals?

Hope and Faith told her, and told her truly, that he would rush to meet her and seize her with affection in his arms. The moment he saw her at the door of the tent, he sprang from his horse and passionately embraced her.

“Ever dearest Azzahra?” he exclaimed, wild

with the maddening intoxication of amorous devotion. "How I have pined after you, the gallant preserver of my life, and sighed to learn your fate!"

"You must not forget how nearly you lost your own life, endeavouring to save mine," she interposed. "But for that brave dog, the tremendous waves that were beating on the shore must have swallowed you up. How I should love to caress the splendid noble creature!"

"Your desire may perhaps be fulfilled some day, and not far distant," he replied with fondness, while she deeply coloured, well aware that he was looking forward to the time when they would be united in marriage.

"But what blessed fate has decreed our meeting thus far away?" he continued, unable to restrain his astonishment at finding her along with Olinda in the depths of the Desert.

"Do you forget my saying at the Sahel," she whispered, for she wanted not Olinda to learn of her belief in divination, "that a sorceress prophesied our love would triumph, and we should meet again far away?"

"Well I remember," he replied, with a kind smile at her simplicity, "and how you refused to let me follow. But you see I have followed, nevertheless, and worked out the fulfilment of the prophecy."

Forgetful of all but her he loved, he would

have questioned her about her escape from the pretended Spaniard, and about her unaccountable participation in the Chenouan outrage, but Olinda took umbrage at remaining so long unnoticed, in her anxiety to hear wherefore St. Bertrand came not likewise, nor lent his assistance.

“The black, false villain!” exclaimed Henry, white with rage at the mention of St. Bertrand’s name. “Let him dare refuse to lend his assistance. Well the coward knows, should he hang back, the penalty he will have to pay. Well he knows that if you are not delivered from bondage the deeply suspicious circumstances of that day at Hadja Roum will be dragged to light by me before the military authorities.”

“Yes, he will follow,” he continued, after a few moments’ thought; “but so many troops are pursuing this Robber of the Desert that there is difficulty in procuring an escort. The matter, however, I considered so urgent, that I at once started in advance with the handful of troopers you see.”

Olinda was angry at hearing St. Bertrand thus spoken against, yet she could not help reflecting that a true gallant lover should have shared the perils of his friend, where the liberty and honour of his inamorata were at stake. Bitter disappointment, however, forced her to keep silence, though modifying considerably her resentment at Wilton’s denunciations.

“ ‘*Les absents ont toujours tort,*’ ” she exclaimed.
“ All of you make mountains of mole-hills.”

“ As for you,” she continued, turning to her cousin, “ you are ever ready to heap up accusations on what you acknowledge to be only ‘suspicious circumstances,’ but were there no ‘suspicious circumstances’ in your own case? Were there no ‘suspicious circumstances’ of my dear, good Azzahra with the wreckers? Yet I love her too deeply to suspect her for one instant of harbouring evil thoughts.”

“ What a deadly stab ! ” thought Azzahra.
“ Oh ! could she have said this intentionally, to cross my path ? ”

“ Not one of you,” Olinda added, “ can give any reason for the faith you say is in you. Not one can bring forward a proof.”

“ I can bring forward a proof,” interposed Kredoudja, who had come out to witness Azzahra’s delight at receiving back her lover, and whose indignation was unbounded at hearing her dear mistress spoken of in disparaging terms. “ The commander of the four mock Spahis was the Marquis de St. Bertrand’s friend whom we met at the Baths of Hamman R’rira.”

“ You are right,” echoed Zorah. “ His face I now remember well.”

“ And so you ought, your faces were so close together,” said Azzahra — a pleasantry that greatly took the fancy of the bride, and caused

her hearty merriment. But her enjoyment Azzahra was unable to share. Her heart was too full at the thought of being betrayed and forsaken by the bosom friend in whom she trusted. Not long, however, did this sorrow mar her happiness in the possession of her dear Christian lover. Soon were her smiles restored by the affectionate confidence reposed in her by Olinda.

Unconscious of the indirect wound inflicted, and of how she had crossed Azzahra's path, through unreflecting advocacy of him she had deemed unjustly accused, Olinda, with her accustomed fondness, besought the Arab when they were apart to bestow counsel and aid upon her in her grievous perplexity.

"Hitherto I have refused to believe in the guilt of this Frenchman," she sadly began, "but Zorah and Kredoudja by their testimony so strongly corroborate the 'suspicious circumstances' implicating him in my misfortune that my faith begins to waver. Oh, Azzahra!" she continued, still bitterly weeping, "did I believe this great wickedness was planned by the Marquis de St. Bertrand, never would I speak to him again. I would tear his image from my heart."

To Azzahra this was a trying ordeal, to be made sit in judgment on her brother; but love for the dear companion who trusted in her truthfulness triumphed. Why should she sacrifice a beloved friend, she reflected, for the sake of one

who, although a relative, knew it not? who, did he know it, would probably disown her? She therefore told Olinda how, in her opinion, every circumstance pointed to the conclusion that the wicked conspiracy was the work of St. Bertrand.

"Oh! tear this bad man's image from your heart, I implore," she concluded, fondly caressing Olinda. "He is unworthy of your love."

"God bless you, dear child," responded Olinda, humbled to find that even this simple Desert child saw how she had been blindfolded and duped by such a merciless intriguer—humbled to find how Azzahra rose up as her superior in wisdom and knowledge. "Alas that your brave and loyal spirit should be fettered here, where crime grows rank and flourishes! that you should share in scenes, romantic and adventurous though they be, which can only end in pillage and bloodshed! that you should for ever be debarred from mingling with those able to appreciate and love your great and noble qualities!"

Azzahra lovingly fell on her neck when she heard these kindly sympathetic words, and well Olinda divined what passed in the mind of the grateful girl. Lifting her up, she imprinted a warm kiss of affection on the flushed cheek of the beautiful Arab.

"What you sigh for I well know," she exclaimed, smiling, as she held Azzahra in her arms, "and now that I have learned to know

you so well, my dearest Azzahra, reckon on my good-will and assistance. To have ever near me such a valued, sincere friend would be my greatest joy and pride.

“But oh ! Azzahra, forgive my great cruelty and hostility ere I met you and loved you,” she continued. “Alas ! I confess that I have been your bitter enemy. I have crossed your path ; I have sought to poison the mind of your lover, to make him despise and hate you. But never, never again, will I speak of my own treasured girl save with profound gratitude and love.”

While in this trustful manner exchanging confidences and vowing eternal fidelity, Wilton approached, and accompanied them inside the tent to where Zorah was seated.

“To Azzahra I have been speaking of the gratitude and love I owe her,” said Olinda in a playful tone to her cousin, “and that reminds me that you have never once taken the trouble to think about me or inquire how I got free from those four robbers, whoever they were, and how I fell into the hands of this flinty-souled janitor, who treats me with such morose severity.”

“Blame me not, my dear Olinda,” he answered in badinage also. “Before Azzahra and I had half concluded our *tendresses* and *embrassements*, you rushed in where angels would fear to tread, that you might learn about your delinquent Marquis.”

“Then will I atone for my indiscretion,” she continued in the same strain, after telling how to Azzahra her escape was due. “Come, Zorah, we will let them be alone together, and may even angels shrink from interrupting their loves!”

Leaving the two lovers locked in each other's arms, the prey of long pent-up, consuming passion, Olinda and Zorah considerably withdrew from where their presence could not fail to prove unwelcome.

Then, after a long time, Wilton followed Olinda, to tell how he and his dear Arab had vowed vows of eternal fidelity, and how the fond girl was ready to give up all and fly with him to the ends of the earth.

“Will you promise, Olinda,” he eagerly asked in conclusion, “that you will cherish this simple Child of the Desert? that to her you will be as a sister? that you will treat her gently and affectionately, when she is far, far away from the land of her fathers?”

“Solemnly I pledge my word,” she replied with warmth. “So deep is my attachment to the pure, guileless friend who rescued me from the jaws of destruction, so warmly do I respect and honour her exalted virtues, that I hail the thought of having her ever with me. As the wife of my loved cousin, will she not be doubly precious in my sight?”

“Noble girl!” he gratefully exclaimed. “Well I knew this would be your generous reply.”

He then assembled his friends together; and, in their presence, holding Azzahra’s hand in his, he bound himself irrevocably to embrace the earliest opportunity of making her his bride, ever to remain faithful and true till death.

“And now adieu to the Sahara,” he added. “To-morrow’s light must see us away hence, for time is precious. At any moment Si Sala may come with his army, not only to forbid the departure of Azzahra, but likewise to retain Olinda in captivity. By good fortune, Al-Mansour is absent, and none else will venture to dispute the commands of Azzahra, enforced by the Ouled-Mimoum and by my French dragoons.”

Zorah alone failed to express lively satisfaction at this announcement, for, being forced to remain behind with Abou Hassan, she saw herself about to lose the two friends who had been her cherished companions in so many stirring adventures.

Warmly she congratulated the *fiancée* on the career of unmixed bliss before her, dreaming in unsophisticated simplicity that in the gay beautiful capitals of Europe no care nor sorrow could dwell. But alas! jealousy had entered into the soul of the fickle, volatile bride. She was jealous that endless pleasure was to be Azzahra’s lot, while she dragged out the dreary existence of

Moslem Lands. She was jealous that Azzahra should be united to this courtly mannered, divine, adorable Christian, while she consorted with degenerate barbarians.

Little she imagined what the morrow was to bring forth, or she would have spared herself these pangs of jealousy. Little she imagined how the bright, blushing, happy Azzahra would so soon fall from her high estate, to become the most abject and the most wretched of women !

CHAPTER XIII.

“MURDER WILL OUT.”

LOUD rose the cry throughout the camp in the morning that the French were upon them, as the crimson and green uniforms of a strong party of hussars were seen winding their way over the distant hills. The rush to arms and to horse Azzahra stopped, perceiving that the advancing force came in peace, for they waved a white flag in front, and feeling convinced her brother led them on to the succour of Olinda.

As they came near, the form of St. Bertrand could be distinguished, leading on his troop, and as he reached the tent where the group waited to receive him, he gallantly approached to offer his congratulations to Olinda at finding her safe after such fearful perils. But Olinda turned her head away, and deigned not to reply.

“What means this, sir?” he asked of Wilton, hot with anger. “Have you been poisoning this lady’s mind against me by your unfounded inventions?”

“The truth I have told her,” Wilton answered, keeping his temper, “and so have others. Here are two,” he continued, pointing to Zorah and Kredoudja, “who identified the leader of my cousin’s captors, with whom you were so familiar in the camp of the Ouled-Mimoum, as your companion at the baths of Hammam R’rira.”

St. Bertrand looked at Zorah, and beheld dismay stamped upon her face, for Abou Hassan stood by. He remembered her now, remembered with what delight she had encouraged the amorous dalliance of Auguste Pécoul, and saw she was at his mercy.

“Is not this false?” he imperatively demanded of the terror-stricken bride, looking first at her and then at her husband, already aroused to suspicion.

“It is false?” she tremblingly replied, when she beheld the fierce, black expression of distrust that o’ershadowed the face of Abou Hassan.

“And you never saw me, nor friend of mine, at the Baths of Hammam R’rira?”

“Never!” she exclaimed in a tone of decision that astounded every one save Abou Hassan, whose black thoughts vanished away before this indignant assumption of innocence.

“Now what becomes of your foul aspersions cast upon my honour?” demanded Raoul of Wilton. “All you have to rely upon, in addition to what you choose to call ‘suspicious cir-

cumstances,' is the evidence of this Black, who must clearly be mistaken, as well as her superiors."

"You dared to accuse me of conspiring to carry away this lady," he resumed, seeing Henry's consternation at the backsliding of Zorah. "Now even you yourself must acknowledge the accusation to be false; and, if you possess the feelings of a gentleman, you will tender an ample apology."

"That I shall never do," Wilton quietly answered. "The same opinion I still hold. I still maintain that those four miscreants were in your employment and in your pay."

That a duel must ensue seemed inevitable, but St. Bertrand contented himself with threatening that another time Henry should answer for his words.

"This minute, if you choose," retorted Wilton.

"Likely story, indeed!" exclaimed the hussar, "when no compatriot is at hand to act as my second."

"Now look here," interposed Johnson, who had watched the proceedings with keen interest: "I am an outsider, neither French nor English, and always anxious to oblige a friend. If Edwardes takes the Englishman in hand, and I take the Frenchman, the matter is arranged as comfortably as can be."

But this proposition by no means suited the

views of St. Bertrand, whose conscience made of him an arrant coward.

"I have affairs of greater consequence to attend to than idle brawls," he haughtily ejaculated as he twirled his moustaches and clattered his sword upon the ground, to magnify his importance.

"That is a pity," answered the American, "for I *do* know a trick or two in the duelling line. With revolvers, rifles, sabres, bowie-knives, and at gouging even, I have the reputation of being a very handy and respectable performer. In a fight, where I and a friend were seconds, we locked up our men in a dark cellar with a whole load of ammunition beside each where they stood in opposite corners, and told them to keep on firing till one fell. According as the position of each was revealed by the flash from his pistol, his antagonist took a snap shot, and so they continued, without even a graze, until not a bullet remained."

This he said simply to lower the conceitedness of the arrogant dragoon, whom he detested, and who appeared to regard with considerable satisfaction his escape from the fangs of such a blood-thirsty second.

"The business I have in hand presses," continued St. Bertrand, ignoring Johnson's remarks, "and I must hasten to return, now that Miss Somerton has been found. The fact is," he con-

tinued, endeavouring to resume his wonted *naïveté* and to make light of the disgrace he incurred by declining to fight, "some fresh discoveries have come to light about Si Sala, the leader of this marauding insurrection, and to me has been entrusted the duty of investigating the matter. As we all along suspected, this robber chief proves to be the same in whose house you and I once met," he said, turning towards Wilton with cool assurance, as though no quarrel existed, and as though his craven spirit thirsted not for the blood of his enemy.

He proceeded to narrate how one of the French police agents, employed to keep watch in Algiers over this man, had been missing for some time, and how the authorities so strongly suspected foul play at the hands of Selim Mustapha, for that was the fellow's real name, that a large reward had been offered for information.

"With the usual result," he added, bitterly sneering in contempt at the natives, "the temptation has proved too strong for the base worthless Arabs to resist, ever ready to betray each other for gold. A Rami on the Sahel has confessed that late at night, after narrating tales, he left Selim Mustapha and Jean Jacquard together in the Café Maure of a Quahouadji named Yakoub, since which our emissary has never been seen nor heard of. This Yakoub I go to

arrest, from whom doubtless it will be discovered that Jacquard has been foully murdered. Furthermore, the Rami states that on the morrow Selim Mustapha departed with his daughter and a Negress, all disguised in the garb of beggars, and followed by a yellow greyhound covered with scars.”

St. Bertrand was going on to describe how the same group had been traced to Staouéli, where the pretended pauper girl haughtily refused alms offered by a fair European lady; how the “fair woman” had denounced the Arab to the gendarmes at Cheraga for her insolence and pronounced her an impostor; how a gendarme had been found dead and half-devoured by wild beasts beneath the Tomb of the Christian, unquestionably shot by these people for whom he was on the look-out; and how they were supposed to have taken part in the abortive wrecking outrage at Chenoua.

He chanced to look up, when he beheld consternation depicted on every face at this identification of Azzahra as the companion, and perhaps even the accomplice, of a suspected murderer; for even Edwardes and Johnson knew through Olinda about the mendicant appearance assumed by Azzahra and her fellow travellers.

What could the reason be for this instantaneous change? he wondered, as he glanced around from one to another.

None vouchsafed to speak, remaining petrified, as it were, with amazement at what they heard. None moved, save Azzahra, who with trembling hands covered her shame-stricken face.

Surveying more attentively the unaccountable scene, the truth at last burst forth upon St. Bertrand, and he comprehended all. Before him he saw the *pseudo* beggar, the Negress, and the "fair woman" of whom he had been thinking. Even the yellow greyhound with the deep scars was there lying at his feet, watching his looks and movements. So then, he mused, with the delight of a tiger surveying its captive prey, Selim Mustapha's daughter and her black attendant were in his power, for whose arrest in connection with the supposed murders he would earn boundless kudos in Algiers.

For the beautiful Arab he felt compassion, and would willingly have spared her, did it suit his purpose. But his interests demanded that she should be sacrificed, and before his interests all must bow.

Danger would beset his path, he well knew, in the seizure of his prisoners; for a large gathering of the revolted Tribes were around in camp, his troopers were but comparatively few in number, and how the Ouled-Mimoum would act was uncertain. Still the prize was great, and the effort to obtain possession must at all hazards be made.

As he gazed on Azzahra, sympathizing with her misfortunes, pitying her terror and shame, and bewailing the coming act of cruelty to which the necessities of his position impelled him, a gold ring on the hand she held up to conceal her burning blushes riveted his attention.

It was not a woman's ring. It was a large thick signet ring such as a man would wear, and appeared to answer exactly the description given by the police of one worn by the missing Jacquard. This ring St. Bertrand determined should be his. Were his suspicions well founded, what incontrovertible evidence would be furnished of the murder! What renown would await him for discovering and dragging to justice two of the perpetrators!

Smoothly and fawningly he crept over, with the treacherous guile of the serpent, to where the down-stricken Azzahra sat, plunged in silent, soul-consuming grief.

"Let not your heart be thus troubled," whispered the lying deceitful hypocrite, feigning tender solicitude, while he grasped the hand on which glittered the coveted jewel. "All is known to me. I know you to be the child of Si Sala, and I know that in company with him and yonder Soudanese you wandered in the attire of a poverty-stricken mendicant. But, believe me, no need exists for this alarm. Your father stills roams at large, and most probably

will never be taken. Even if arrested, no crime may be proved against him, for the Rami may have sworn falsely, as do such numbers of these lying Arabs, for the mere sake of earning ill-gotten gains. In any case you are personally safe, for none could dream that such a bright pure being would steep her delicate hands in crime."

As he concluded he again warmly pressed Azzahra's hand, while a hearty murmur of applause showed how his kind words of consolation were appreciated, and how his belief in the innocence of their beloved favourite was shared in and confirmed.

In recognition of his chivalrous championship, the unsuspecting victim looked up and gave him a fond smile of humble thankfulness. He had indeed proved himself a brother, she thought, as she surveyed him with affection and pride. Then she looked down and she saw that her ring was gone.

"Oh! give me back my ring!" she wildly shrieked, springing up from the ground and rushing towards the hussar.

"I have no ring of yours," Raoul calmly answered, as he showed his open hands.

"Indeed he took it from me," she persisted, appealing to Wilton. "Oh! for heaven's sake get it back."

But on Wilton making a request for its re-

storation, moved by Azzahra's tearful lamentations, the Frenchman took high ground.

"Already I have disclaimed all knowledge of the matter," he replied, with a look of insolent defiance. "Is that not sufficient? Besides," he continued, "who or what are you, that you dare to interfere in a dispute that concerns you not?"

"Pardon me. This dispute, as you are pleased to designate the attempt of a lady to recover her property, does concern me intimately," Wilton replied with firm composure. "This lady," he continued, as he crossed to where Azzahra stood, and put his arm round her, "is my affianced bride."

"Whew! then allow me to wish you joy of your bride," the hussar answered, with an insulting sneer, as he made a low and formal salutation.

What joyful news! With what delight he gloated over the cowardly stab he was about to give his hated enemy. No pity for Azzahra softened now his flinty heart, greedy for revenge. They both loved, and they both must suffer.

"His affianced bride, indeed!" he muttered, as he moved away to prepare for the march. "Never shall she be bride of his!"

But he recollected that his anger was carrying him along too fast for the execution of his nefarious design, and he returned.

"The treatment I have met at your hands has been most harsh and unkind," the dissembling sycophant began, assuming an air of injured innocence. "First, I am accused of causing the forcible abduction of Miss Somerton, without a particle of foundation for so heinous a charge; and now I am taxed with the petty larceny of a piece of jewellery, about which I know absolutely nothing. But far be it from me to bear ill-will where ladies are in question," he concluded, addressing Olinda. "The poor services of myself and my troop of cavalry are at your command to guard you and your friends from the dangers of the Desert on your return, should you deign to place yourselves under our protection."

As the designing knave expected, Olinda felt forced to return her thanks in accepting his welcome offer.

Already the weak girl began to forget her wrongs, to disbelieve in his wickedness, to sigh for him back beside her; and this the subtle traitor readily perceived.

"That you would turn against me, Miss Somerton, I did not expect," said he, with a deeply mortified look that touched her heart. "I thought you would have believed me incapable of these crimes and meannesses with which I am charged."

"And so I do," she exclaimed, wrought up to

pitying commiseration, all her momentary, superficial anger vanishing, and all her love returning—for is not pity akin to love? "You are too good and too noble thus to sully your reputation."

This heedless declaration, which gave such pain to all beside, was as balm to his designing soul. More madly than ever the passion in his breast burned for his adored idol. More firmly than ever did he believe that, once in his power, he could do with her what he listed.

Would that those accursed English had not come! he thought. With his hussars he could have taken her off and placed her in security, while he returned to Tlemcen to announce the failure of his search. Then would he join her far away and make her his own.

"Well, I must only live in hope," he thought. "The day may yet come when I shall triumph."

By this time all was ready, and the order was given to mount.

The instant Azzahra and Kredoudja were in the saddle, at a sign from St. Bertrand the troopers, closing round, seized the bridles of their horses and led them away at full gallop, disregarding their screams and remonstrances.

As their commander followed, Parthian-like, he turned round and glutted his vengeance.

"Your bride I arrest on the charge of

murder," he called out, with a scowl of triumphant defiance at Henry.

"Here is the ring of the murdered man," he continued, as he held up the jewel, "with his name engraved at full length on the inside, found by me in her possession."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INTERCESSOR.

SHOULD she confide in her captor, and unfold the close relationship existing between them? pondered Azzahra as she and St. Bertrand rode on in thoughtful silence, with the hope that he would show pity and would shelter from infamy his own flesh and blood. Should she surrender as proof, the sole proof she could give, the pocket-book of the murdered man, which she still bore in her bosom, telling how it had come accidentally into her possession, as had likewise the ring, but disclaiming all guilty knowledge?

Were it not for his base and heartless betrayal in purloining the ring, the temptation would have been strong to invoke thus his compassion, and to throw herself on his mercy, seeing the dangers which beset her, and which could by this means alone be averted. But she trembled to place in the hands of one who had evinced utter disregard for honour and truth such a deadly

weapon of attack, which might be so easily turned into crushing hostile evidence of complicity in crime against herself, and likewise against her father in the event of his apprehension.

Yet, on the other hand, did she fail to produce this additional testimony, could she expect to persuade St. Bertrand that she was in truth his sister? Could she expect to soften his heart, so as to regain her liberty? The instinctive promptings of fear and mistrust prevailed. Seizing an opportunity when none could observe, she cautiously took from her breast the pocket-book, and let it fall among the long bent-like grass beneath.

"Allah be praised! The bitterness of this danger is passed," gasped Azzahra, a sigh of relief escaping from her lips.

Short-lived was her exultation. The rear-guard, whose coming she had overlooked, perceived the dark object in the grass, picked it off the ground, and handed it to their commander before his terror-stricken prisoner.

But its significance and importance he failed to estimate, plans for victory over Olinda and anticipations of renown at Azzahra's apprehension solely engrossing his wicked thoughts. Little suspecting to whom the prize had belonged, and concluding that it had been heedlessly dropped by some ordinary wayfarer, he placed

it in his sabretache, with the intention of inspecting its contents at his leisure, when the toilsome march was finished.

On they rode over interminable mounds of yellow sand, until Laghouat burst into view, standing on its isolated ridge in a hollow between two lofty tower-topped peaks, the whole surrounded by strong fortifications; while stretched out in front of the city waved the grand forest of twenty-five thousand date-palms, which constitute the wealth and pride of the fertile oasis.

As they passed along the streets, a veiled native woman came to the door of one of the Arab dwellings which are placed below the level of the roadway at the bottom of a flight of steps, so as to shut out the prying passer-by from a view of the jealously guarded interior.

It was the guilty Ayesha, the divorced, discarded wife of Selim Mustapha. She saw the child of her sin go by, a weeping abashed captive, yet knew not who she was. Her unhappy daughter's face she had never looked upon since their severance in years long passed, though often, secure from recognition behind the concealing shelter of her yashmak, she had hovered round her former home to follow with loving and admiring eyes the graceful form of her beloved offspring. Along with her child she had noticed Kredoudja ever in attendance,

and the features of the Black, as she now approached on horseback, at once came back to her memory.

St. Bertrand, too, she recognised, having many times at Algiers watched to see him and admire his handsome features and his manly form, that with such vividness recalled to mind his departed father, whom of old she so devotedly loved.

Who could this be that rode beside them in custody? Alas! could it be the delicately nurtured gentle Azzahra, coming as a degraded culprit, arrested too by her own brother? Impelled by dire forebodings, she followed and besought an interview with St. Bertrand, of whom she tremblingly inquired whether his prisoner were named Azzahra.

"That she is," he replied in triumph at having made the valuable capture, "and she has been arrested on a charge of murder."

"Azzahra a murderess?" exclaimed Ayesha in a wild tempest of grief. "Never will I believe such baseless calumnious slander."

"Behold the proof of her guilt," he coldly replied, showing her the gold ring of Jacquard. "I myself took it from her, and here you see the murdered man's name inscribed."

"I care not," answered Ayesha. "Convinced I am her hand never committed the deed. Oh, have pity and spare her!" the weeping

mother continued, falling on her knees before this proud, hardened, selfish man, and wringing her hands in despair. "Her pure, virtuous, gentle nature would recoil in abhorrence from guilt and crime."

St. Bertrand became irritated at being intruded upon and importuned by a stranger.

"Who are you, that with such earnestness you plead for this criminal?" he angrily demanded.

"One, though you know me not, who was ever dear to your beloved father," sobbed the unhappy woman.

"You dear to my father?" he asked in surprise. "Can you then be the Ayesha of whom he always so fondly spoke? whom he declared to the day of his death he loved better than any on earth?" continued Raoul, regarding her with softened feelings.

"The same," she exclaimed, a smile of thankful joy to know she was remembered with love to the last forcing its way through her tears, like a ray of sunshine glancing brightly down through the April shower. "Your father's Ayesha implores for mercy. Her you would hurl into the depths of disgrace is your father's child."

"You ask a favour hard to grant," he said thoughtfully in reply. "You ask me to transgress my duty."

"I ask you to perform, not to transgress, your duty," she retorted. "I ask you to refrain from bringing disgrace on your father's memory. I ask you to shield and protect that father's offspring—your own sister."

"But to me you are a stranger," he argued, "whose assertions I have no means of verifying. What proof have I that you are Ayesha, or that Ayesha bare a child to my father? Granting even that what you say is true, what proof have I that Azzahra is that child? On the contrary, I have the strongest proof that my prisoner is the daughter of Selim Mustapha in Algiers."

While he yet spoke, an orderly entered the room, and laid upon a table the memorandum-book of the murdered Frenchman, which had been found among St. Bertrand's accoutrements.

As the hussar continued in conversation with Ayesha, he unconsciously took the pocket-book into his hand, when the clasp became unloosed and a paper fell to the ground.

When he unfolded this paper, he uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"Are you then the divorced wife of Selim Mustapha?" he ejaculated as he lifted his eyes with an inquiring look.

"Alas, such I am," she sorrowfully confessed, "divorced by reason of my devoted attachment to your father."

“Wonderful to relate, here is full and ample corroboration of every word you have uttered,” he exclaimed, showing her the document. “This memorandum-book, from which it fell, was found by my troopers in the wild wastes of the Desert, but by what miraculous accident it came there is an impenetrable mystery.”

“Allah sent it, to save my child,” sighed Ayesha, looking up thankfully to heaven.

“Degraded superstition like that does well enough for women, but men believe not such absurd rubbish,” he replied with a bitter laugh of scorn. “What does Allah care about you or your child?”

But, although not come from Allah, he began to wonder from whom it had come, by whom it had been left thus far away from the haunts of man. He took up the book again and examined it more attentively. It answered in all respects the description of the one belonging to the missing emissary of police. Again he looked, and beheld the signature of Jean Jacquard himself. Then flashed across his mind how, at the Baths of Hammam R'rira, Azzahra had exclaimed that he was her brother, and how she had fainted, shrieking with horror at his professions of love after Auguste Pécoul pronounced his name.

She must have had this book in her possession, and learned the secret from its contents. It

must have been she who flung it from her, as they journeyed along, to make away with its crushing evidence.

He would seek to discover. Calling Azzahra to the arms of her overjoyed mother, he told how Ayesha had interceded on her behalf, and how desirous he was to be merciful, now that he knew how closely they were related.

With seeming pleasure he watched the ardent transports of delight indulged in by mother and child after the separation of so many years, but he only watched his opportunity to betray; for he desired to get his victim more deeply in his power and turn her to his account, before setting her free.

That he entertained sinister designs the keen instinct of the mother suspected, and she took occasion to whisper, unobserved, in her daughter's ear the words whose importance Azzahra well comprehended: "Disown the book."

Presently the base traitor, thinking to take his victim unawares while giving free rein to her filial affection, suddenly held up before her the tell-tale memoranda, accusing her of having thrown them away, to get rid of the evidence they afforded against herself and Selim Mustapha.

"Those papers I never saw before," she replied, prepared for the attack by Ayesha's warning, and emboldened by her presence. But though she spoke calmly, a slight blush,

which he failed not to detect, told of the suppressed agitation that surged within.

"If you did not gain the information here," he went on, pointing to the written statement he held in his hand, "wherefore call me your brother at Hammam R'rira? and wherefore scream with dismay when I endeavoured to put my arm round you and embrace you?"

Azzahra declared she had only spoken in jest, to stop his unwelcome importunities; but he derisively shook his head.

"It was in jest also that you fainted, no doubt?" he added with a withering sneer.

"Fatigue after a weary journey made me faint," she replied, assuming a look of confidence, for she hoped to baffle him by such a plausible excuse.

"You are right," he mercilessly pursued; "the journey is weary, on foot especially, from the Café Maure of Yakoub on the Sahel to the wreckers of Chenoua, even though making short halts at Staouéli, at Cheraga, and above all, among the *broussaille* below the Koubba-er-Roumia."

To Ayesha these taunts were unintelligible, but her shrinking, awe-struck child they overwhelmed with consternation. This pitiless man—her brother—knew all, and was hunting her to death.

"Be not so cast down," he resumed, observing

her conscience-stricken aspect of alarm ; "liberty shall be yours."

"May the blessings of Allah and his holy Prophet rest upon your head!" exclaimed Ayesha, interrupting him. "The son of such a noble, gallant gentleman could not stoop to crush a weak, defenceless woman."

"But only upon one condition," he added.

"If that condition entails no dishonour, Azzahra will consent," said Ayesha.

"You must deliver Selim Mustapha a captive into my hands," he continued to his sister ; "lure him, under pretence of releasing you from prison, to where I shall be in waiting, and from that moment you are free."

"Betray my own father!" angrily ejaculated the proud Child of the Desert, drawing herself up erect, and surveying her tyrant oppressor with scorn. "Never!"

"Why not?" the insidious, wily traitor demanded. "Has not this trouble come upon you through his iniquitous treason and perfidy? No debt of gratitude you owe to him."

"I owe him no debt of gratitude, say you?" Azzahra haughtily responded. "I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for having ever acted towards me as a fond, indulgent parent."

He turned then to Ayesha and asked that she would intercede with her daughter, so that her life might be spared.

"Towards you Selim Mustapha acted as a villain," he exclaimed, "and revenge ought to be sweet."

"He acted as a brave and honourable man," retorted Ayesha in imperious disdain. "When he discovered my shame, when he discovered I had brought ridicule and contempt upon his name, he wisely and properly disowned me, and drove me from his door. Not even to avert the stroke of death from my treasured Azzahra, would I wrong again the honoured husband of my youth."

"Does no jealous rage rack your breast then to know that your rivals, his other wives, have triumphed and supplanted you in his love?" he insidiously asked.

"His other wives are good, virtuous women," she sobbed forth in bitter anguish of heart. "They have a right to his love. None have I, alas! poor polluted wretch that I am."

"So be it then. Have your way," he called out as he went from their presence, furious at being foiled in his treacherous scheme; "but remember, your child is doomed. Her fate you have sealed."

He hoped the two defenceless women would have brought him back and surrendered, but he knew not the lofty contempt with which both regarded his dastardly proposal.

When the sorrowing mother had departed he

again sought his captive sister, to repeat his offer and to be once more repulsed indignantly.

"You are unwise to refuse my terms, Azzahra," he fawningly spake, feigning friendliness and interest in her welfare. "When I seize on Yakoub he will tell all, and Selim Mustapha's capture is but a question of time. Your action, therefore, would merely hasten forward the inevitable. In no other respect would it alter the aspect of affairs. Better, then, to secure your deliverance on such easy terms, rather than stand a convicted murderess in the felon's dock.

"One more chance you shall have for dear life," he resumed, seeing her obstinate determination not to have her father's blood upon her head. "Write for me a letter I require. Write what I dictate, and you shall live." And he placed writing materials before her.

Well surmising his fell purpose to compass the destruction of herself and those she loved, and knowing the necessity of reading beforehand what she wrote, she besought that, instead of dictating what he required under her hand, he would make a draft of the letter for her to copy.

"One in your position setting up to make terms is somewhat anomalous," he replied. "However, I consent."

He consented, because the letter he wanted at

any price ; for he had shifted his ground and changed his tactics. Finding the impossibility of suborning his sister, and obtaining through her instrumentality the perfidious betrayal of her putative father, he turned his wicked machinations against Olinda once again.

The futility he saw of trying to decoy Olinda into the meshes of his net, after such a scare, by the same surreptitious devices that had failed already : he saw no chance of succeeding was left so long as she remained single : he saw that through her union with another, as he would not marry her himself, lay his only way to victory. The wife of one she cared not for and who cared not for her, unhappiness would of a surety be their portion, and then would come his hour of triumph.

The Villa Isly belonged, he knew, to Olinda's aunt, who would surely return yearly with Geraldine Wilton, her adopted niece. To be near this, his favourite sister, Henry Wilton was certain to follow. Were Henry and Olinda married, she would accompany him too, and the coveted opportunity would arrive.

To hope for the realisation of such a scheme, however, seemed like the visionary dream of a madman, in the face of Wilton's passionate devotion for Azzahra, and Olinda's lingering love for himself.

But he resolved to make the attempt, and this

he thought could best be done through the agency of his sister.

His sister, then, he prepared to sacrifice, that he might gain his vile ends. Sitting down he wrote for her the wily letter she was to copy, in which wholesale vituperation of himself was craftily made to do important duty in carrying out his black designs.

It ran thus :—

“When this reaches you, my own treasured Henry, your devoted but unhappy Azzahra will be no more. Her sorrow and her shame are greater than she can bear. Oh! for what should I longer live, my fondest-loved blessing, now that my fair reputation is blasted and my name is abhorred? Is it not better far that a despised wretch like me should depart, than that such an outcast should be chained to you, a burden through life? Is it not better that you should be released from your plighted faith, which you are too honourable to break, and that you should be free? Believe me, darling, I act for the best. Believe me, I am your true friend in what I do.

“But before I go hence and be no more, one dying request I would fain make, which you will not refuse to grant—the request of one standing on the brink of the grave.

“My earnest desire, Henry, is that you take to wife your dear cousin, my cherished friend, whom I love better than life. You both would

seem destined for each other. She is worthy of you—worthier far than your poor despised Azzahra. For Olinda's happiness as well as for yours this will be best. So long as she remains single so long will her evil genius, the designing Marquis de St. Bertrand, haunt her, to lavish amorous attentions which, alas! she is but too willing to receive. Oh! Henry, should any kindly remembrance of our loves, any pity for my untimely fate, linger in your breast, save Olinda from this man. United to such, soon would she follow me to the grave.

“And now farewell, for ever! Oh! grant this prayer, in memory of one you have loved, and try to forget your poor Child of the Desert.”

“There! write that out and you are safe,” St. Bertrand exclaimed, handing his sister the paper, and exulting at how he had made virulent abuse of himself serve his own nefarious purposes.

“And this you want to make me write?” she said, throwing back the letter into his hand: “this tissue of lies and deceit? For shame!”

As she turned to leave the room he recalled her.

“Reflect well on what you are doing, Azzahra,” he argued. “Reflect on what a priceless boon you want to fling away. Your proud spirit rebels, and naturally, at bidding your lover an eternal farewell, and throwing him into the arms of another. But are you aught to him,

after being numbered with robbers and assassins? You know that even now his eyes must be opened, and that he would receive you with disdain. Yet to this wretched delusion you cling sooner than pluck yourself and your father as brands from the burning."

"But there is no question of my father being spared?" she urged. "On the contrary, even now you pressed me to betray him."

"If you write that letter I swear that not a hair of his head shall be injured," ejaculated her brother.

"Because he is free and unconquered," she scornfully replied. "How can you injure a man you are unable to reduce into subjection."

"Can he always remain an outlaw in the Desert?" he asked. "Must he not some day desire to return to his home and his household? How then? Think you he would dare to enter Algiers with a halter round his neck?"

The fond, grateful daughter hesitated. Ruffian though Selim Mustapha was, he had always given her a father's love. How then could she refuse to spread over him the shield of protection?

St. Bertrand saw his advantage and followed it up.

"In you rests the power to ward off the punishment his crimes deserve," he insisted. "This ring found on your finger, these papers cast

away by your hand, shall be destroyed; the Rami shall be discredited as a perjured hungerer after gold; the Quahouadji of the Sahel shall not be arrested; the Gendarmes at Staouéli and Cheraga shall be silenced; and all evidence of guilt shall be destroyed. Only hand me that letter in your handwriting and, whenever Selim Mustapha pleases, he may return to his family and his position in Algiers free and unfettered."

"And this you swear?" she asked, surveying him doubtingly, for she remembered his perfidy in abstracting the ring.

"Most solemnly I swear," he emphatically replied, placing his hand on his heart, "and you shall go free the moment your European lover leaves the shores of Africa. Fain would I release you at once, but too well I know you would seek him out."

"If I give my sacred promise not to depart from the house of my mother here, will you not trust me?" she asked beseechingly.

"I will trust you," he eagerly called out, overjoyed at having carried his point.

"And I will trust in your good faith too," she replied, as she proceeded to copy the fatal letter.

On receiving the document from her hands, he sent to summon Ayesha, that he might deliver Azzahra into her safe keeping.

"You are an able intercessor," said St. Ber-

trand, addressing Ayesha, who was profuse in exclamations of delight and gratitude. "But for your confirmation of the evidence contained in this document, I should never have known this darling girl was my sister, and she would still be a prisoner in the hands of justice."

His promise to free Azzahra he had kept; but his promise to protect Selim Mustapha he had no intention of keeping, having only given it to dupe and to betray.

The moment, therefore, that Ayesha and her daughter, accompanied by the rejoicing Kre-doudja, were gone, he indited a dispatch to the authorities, telling of how Jacquard's ring and memorandum-book had been discovered close to where a band of Selim Mustapha's wild hordes had lately passed, left there, of course, by him or one of his confederates in the murder. Bitterly he denounced Selim Mustapha as the undoubted assassin, and urged that no effort should be spared to drag him to the scaffold. That he was compelled, through respect for his father's memory, to liberate Azzahra, who was clearly a chief accessory to the crime of Selim Mustapha, gave him deep regret; still he hoped good value had been given for this act of generosity, which would yet bring forth a rich harvest of fruit.

Next he enclosed to Wilton Azzahra's letter, giving besides minute circumstantial details of

her deplorable self-destruction, and expressing profound commiseration for her tragic end.

Then the foul reprobate rejoiced exceedingly, and laughed a loud laugh of successful wickedness.

CHAPTER XV.

DESPAIR.

"To horse, and save the child of your chieftain," shouted Wilton, to the fierce Saharian tribes encamped around, as, in despair, he beheld his beloved one hurried away by St. Bertrand and the hussars.

But vain the appeal for help; the wild, undisciplined desert warriors, though overwhelming their numbers, cared not to follow and attack the compact, well-organized body of French dragoons, even though it were to rescue the daughter of the mighty Si Sala. Leader they had none, to marshal them and head the pursuit. Si Sala was away; Al-Mansour was away; none was at hand, in whom they trusted.

So it came to pass that, while dismay, vacillation, and confusion prevailed among the helpless, gesticulating throng, Azzahra vanished out of Henry's sight.

Sorrowfully he turned from the scene, to retrace his steps out of the sandy plains of the

desert, leaving behind all he prized and loved best. He loved fondly as ever, believing with simple implicit faith that the accusations of St. Bertrand were mere baseless fabrications, launched against the hapless Azzahra for the sole purpose of torturing and crushing himself.

With what contempt and despair he looked back at those worthless, abject sons of the desert, who shrank in fear from striking one blow for the salvation of a helpless maiden, entrusted to their safe keeping by a confiding parent! how gladly he turned his back on the contemptible crew, knowing that their treacherous, ruffian faces he should never more behold.

In vain Olinda endeavoured to soothe his grief. His headstrong, ungovernable despair made him regard even her as instrumental, though unconsciously to herself, in working out his misfortunes. Though he thanked God that she had been found and was safe; yet was it not by reason of the search for her that this calamity had arisen? Had not St. Bertrand and his troopers arrived on the scene, these infamous calumnies would never have been cast in his Azzahra's face, and she would now be nestling in his arms. But fate had otherwise decreed, and he must needs submit with manly, patient endurance to this crushing bereavement. Oh! with what unresting pertinacity his deadly

enemy had hunted him down! How he had worked his wicked will! how he had triumphed!

Is it not truly written that the wicked shall prosper? and does not the base cringing world honour and applaud their prosperity, unheeding the tender spirits crushed, the heart-strings torn asunder, the noble natures trampled upon, as they mount to the pinnacle of unholy success?

Thus thought Wilton in the moment of his bitter agony. So overwhelming were the desolation and despair of the wretched man, that his companions deemed it kindness to refrain from intermeddling in his grief, or treading on the holy ground of his lamentations after blissful hours for ever fled. The terrible scene they had just witnessed gave them ample food for reflection.

In their eyes Azzahra, much as they loved her and desired her innocence proven, was open to grave suspicion. That her hand was stained with blood they believed not, but that she was an accomplice and had guilty knowledge appeared almost established, when they came to think the matter over calmly, by the terrified dismay she exhibited on learning the revelations made by the Rami and on hearing St. Bertrand declare that he would arrest Yakoub, the Quahouadji of the Sahel. The mysterious ring, too, which her accuser declared had belonged to the missing man, and which she evinced such unmistakable apprehension at losing! did it not

seem to afford terrible confirmation of her deep complicity?

Unwillingly, the conviction forced itself upon their minds that all had happened for the best—best for Wilton, best for Olinda.

Their friend's alliance with this desert child, the daughter of a worthless rebel outcast, albeit herself so pure, so good, and so refined, as hitherto they had believed, had never found favour in their sight; and though Olinda had of late relinquished her hostility, yet was the change wrought less by reason than by gratitude, by affection, and by admiration of the Arab's talents and accomplishments.

With how much more intense disfavour must such a union be regarded now, when this girl was charged with participation in crimes of the deepest dye! and did not her undenied presence with the wreckers on the shore at Chenoua prove in what scenes she delighted to take part? did it not strongly corroborate the accusations made against her? Her excuse that love of romantic adventure alone attracted her to the spot, must be held as but a flimsy pretext; for well she must have known that the Arabs would not have gone armed to the wreck, had their aim merely been to render assistance.

Thus reasoned those who so late were the unhappy Azzahra's warmest friends.

Such is life! The absent are always wrong!

That Azzahra acted improperly was of course indisputable, but it was through the generous enthusiasm of a warm impulsive nature. Reared in seclusion, unversed in knowledge of the great world and its wickedness, she gave a free rein to her vivid imagination and her craving for excitement.

Though still refusing to credit that Raoul was privy to her abduction, Olinda's resentment against him was great for his treacherous betrayal of her friend; for the base falsehood he had told about the ring; for purloining the ring; and, above all, for his ungallant abandonment of herself, leading off in an opposite direction the escort he had faithfully promised, and leaving her at the mercy of the roving prowling bands of the desert.

How the love of self ever predominates! What a magic influence it exercises over all our thoughts, words, and works!

The warmth with which she expressed her vexation brought lively satisfaction to her fellow travellers, for they hoped that her eyes were at length becoming opened to the false, worthless character of the man who had so nearly entrapped her in his trammels.

Thus, they trusted, good would come out of what had occurred—that Olinda would be saved from St. Bertrand, and that Henry would be saved from the Child of the Desert.

As they conversed in this strain, the two for whom they expressed their friendly solicitude silently buried in gloomy reflections, their escort of the Ouled-Mimoum, with blanched cheeks and bated breath, whispered that a lion was in the way.

In the direction the men indicated by their eyes, for they dared not point with the hand, the huge tawny monster was seen lying on the ground, at a short distance from the track along which they must keep, and calmly surveying their approach.

When Olinda's turn came to pass, her self-possession fled, and she uttered a wild shriek of terror. This the savage beast mistook for a challenging shout of defiance, and springing forward in bounds upwards of thirty feet long, he charged at one of the Ouled-Mimoum, who rode close beside Olinda. The terrified wretch endeavoured to let himself drop from his horse at the off side out of the creature's course through the air, so that it might clear the empty saddle in its leap, and thus pass by; but he was too late. With a terrific roar the furious brute lighted upon him and dragged him to the ground. Hearing the yells of the dying Arab, and seeing the merciless lion shake him in its mighty jaws, the Europeans wanted to go to his assistance; but this the other Arabs in their terror would not permit.

"Fly!" they cried, as they put spurs to their

horses, and left their comrade to his fate. "If you stay, you are lost."

When out of danger, and able to slacken their headlong pace, they told how several more lions were known to haunt that region in a body, who might have come to attack them, attracted by the roarings of their companion which had echoed afar.

The frightful death of the Bedouin filled Olinda's mind with horror, and his expiring shrieks kept ringing in her ears. Her weakness and folly had brought about this dire catastrophe, she groaned, and she refused to be comforted.

Soon as the excitement and the mutual congratulations at escape from such a terrible doom had passed, Henry relapsed into his gloomy, silent reverie, a prey to mourning and despair.

Was life, after all, so great a boon? he asked himself. Was it worth the trouble and misery it entailed? Did it pay?

CHAPTER XVI.

VANITY.

“GET away, you naughty, wicked man!” exclaimed Alice Thornton to the American with pleased coquettish badinage, as he playfully took in his hand her flowing curls and surveyed their curious tints, after the wanderers had returned to Tlemcen, and after the exciting adventures of the Desert had been narrated to the wondering ears of Geraldine and herself.

The kind, worthy old lady was in high spirits, jubilant with thankful delight at the happy return of Olinda, for whose safety she had during many weary days at Tlemcen felt grave and torturing alarm.

The events that had occurred she looked upon as pregnant with happy results for the nephew and niece she loved. Henry was severed for ever from Azzahra; and Olinda, if she had eyes to see and ears to hear, must be severed for ever from St. Bertrand.

“How dare you keep on pawing me?” she

cried out, feigning indignation against Johnson, who again in jest toyed with her auburn locks, though unable to suppress delight at being thus familiarly noticed by the other sex. Although an old maid, and a highly *prononcée* one, she was no cross, soured, gossiping, tea-drinking, scandal-mongering old maid. She was genial, benevolent, cheerful, and amiable, for this simple reason, that she still unswervingly believed in herself. She believed that Cupid would yet pityingly befriend her by wounding some fair mortal for her special advantage; wherefore she looked forward with blind, unswerving faith to the day when the coming man should arrive, and the disconsolate lover should fling himself with agonized devotion at her compassionate feet.

The beauties of her person afforded her an inexhaustible subject for contemplation and admiration—indeed a considerable portion of her time was devoted to the development and cultivation of her charms. Her complexion and her hair were especial objects of tender solicitude and care.

That the lustrous beauty of her enviable wealth of hair gave unmeasured satisfaction to her friends by reason of the richness of its hues she firmly believed and accepted as an article of faith, wherefore she bestowed on it a vast amount of labour and careful attention; but the production of those brilliant tints was to her a

season of martyrdom and purgatory ; for, during the periods devoted to this arduous duty, she was compelled to withdraw altogether from social intercourse, communing with herself in secret in her chamber, whither none were permitted to enter save her confidential attendant, who conducted the complicated operations. On these occasions headaches invariably set in, which satisfactorily accounted for the forced seclusion of the unhappy sufferer. But it was remarked that these attacks always recurred at fixed intervals, and by a strange coincidence just as the wavy locks were beginning to lose their wonted tinge, especially at the roots, so that the advent of the malady could be predicted with positive certainty, and as accurately as an eclipse of the sun or the reappearance of a comet.

When the required colour had been produced, she lightly tripped down once more, cured of her headache, but feigning to look saddened and interesting after her recent sufferings.

Unless in a strange flood of daylight, the result of her hapless seclusion proved a brilliant success—a rich mellowed tint suffused the flowing locks. But when the bright rays of the sun shone on the luxuriant mass, a decided purplish tinge was too distinctly perceptible, which quickly dispelled the fond illusion. In front these lovely renovated locks hung down

each cheek in the form of a long plump roll, these rolls being supported in their destined places by little brown network bags of the same shade as the hair, and so fine in texture as to be almost invisible, that descended from the top of her head, where a large cap rested above them, embellished with a profusion of gay ribbons and a whole *parterre* of brilliant many-tinted flowers. These long plump rolls of hair were what had attracted the notice of Johnson, and tempted his forward attentions, which she pretended to repel, but at which in her heart she greatly rejoiced and triumphed.

As to her complexion, its study and manipulation required not such serious sacrifices; for the washes, cosmetics, and powders she liberally employed could be applied with comparatively trivial loss of time, while the valued results produced were instantaneous and magical in their effects.

Her feet, as well, afforded her exquisite delight, for she considered them of infinitesimal proportions, more becoming, indeed, the form of some fairy sprite than that of an ordinary mortal. They were encased in tiny slender prunella shoes, supported by narrow sandals crossed over the instep and tied above the ankle in a little knot. To enable the symmetrical perfections of these parts of her person to be the more readily discovered, her dresses were cut conspicuously

short in front, projecting forwards in a bow, when she walked or stood.

In short, she was—

An antiquated *belle*, of whom it's true
That distance lends enchantment to the view.

The ingenious and sagacious reader will have discovered already that inordinate personal vanity was the old lady's foible—her besetting sin. In fact, she was eaten up with vanity. With her, vanity amounted to a mental disease, and the older she grew the more this malady increased—the more tenaciously she clung to her fast-fading charms, as well as to the anticipated love-conquests she still hoped they were predestined to achieve.

As a natural result of this overweening self-conceit, she was ever open to the grossest flattery, and listened with greedy ears to the most barefaced mockery, administered in the form of complimentary adulation. Oft had the sweet voice of praise thus delighted her swimming brain. Oft had she believed that the hour and the man had come at last. But alas! he only came, and saw, and conquered. He failed to follow up his victory. After a little time he departed, and she beheld his dear face no more.

Had the fault been his, or hers? she often wondered. Could there have been any unseemly remissness on her part? Impossible! she argued. Had she not studiously made every advance,

afforded every opportunity, consistent with feminine propriety? With no heedless act of mistaken prudish modesty could she reproach her conscience—no false assumption of unfelt bashfulness. So all was a bewildering riddle, an inexplicable mystery.

The excellent woman was moreover highly simple in her ideas and thoroughly uninitiated in the ways of life, having never mixed in the vortex of the great world, to be indoctrinated in its hollowness, its deceitfulness, its wickedness, and its contemptible meanness.

With implicit faith she believed whatever was told her, no matter how monstrous or absurd, and was consequently a source of endless amusement to her juvenile relations, who entertained themselves by good-humouredly making fun of her and “selling” her, as they expressed themselves, on all convenient occasions.

But Olinda never would join in or countenance these harmless escapades, both because she was warmly attached to her aunt, and because she looked upon such idle pursuits as contemptible waste of time amongst people of wisdom and understanding.

These high-flown ideas, although right and proper as regarded the treatment of her aunt, were little calculated to fit Olinda for mingling in the great herd amidst whom her social position entitled her to a distinguished place. Still

the possession of such laudable qualities proclaimed undoubtedly the purity and goodness of her heart. Yet into what danger and vicissitudes had her extravagant, narrow-minded notions already thrown her! Into how much greater dangers and vicissitudes would they throw her, alas! in the future!

“I cannot endure seeing a good, kind-hearted creature, like my aunt, thus turned into ridicule and made a common butt for the amusement of others,” Olinda would disdainfully exclaim on such occasions. “What wit or cleverness can be displayed in making statements diametrically opposed to fact, and in inducing others to believe them through implicit reliance on the good faith of the narrator? What can there be to laugh at in such senseless behaviour? in behaviour closely verging, too, on direct falsehood and deception?”

But Geraldine Wilton did not entertain such lofty views of right and wrong, for she unhesitatingly embraced every opening for gratifying her naughty caprices at her aunt's expense. Yet was she by no means a badly disposed child. Contrariwise, she was warm-hearted and affectionate, indulging in these wild pranks merely from love of merriment. She, too, loved her aunt fondly, which the latter well knew, and for this reason endured, without murmur, the wayward follies of the high-spirited, but somewhat

spoiled, young lady. Moreover, she delighted to hear the ringing laugh of the child through the house, and encouraged her to romp and make herself happy.

She acted in accordance with the words of an old song she loved to sing in her juvenile days :

“ Childhood’s happy voices,
 Bid them not be still ;
While the heart rejoices,
 Let its rapture peal.
Check not in its gladness
 The young heart’s full glow,
For the hour of sadness
 Soon, alas ! ’t will know.”

The child was wise and prudent beyond her years, though so full of wild spirits, and she enjoyed the society of her elders fully as much as that of her playmates. She was thoroughly childlike, and yet at the same time thoroughly sensible—childish with children, sensible with men and women, amongst whom she had been so much brought up. Richly endowed with quickness and talent, she was a thoroughly precocious genius ; wherefore with Olinda, who appreciated her pure, noble character and her undoubted mental gifts, she was an especial favourite.

Her heedless pranks, outrageous though they were at times, and her impulsive bursts of delighted merriment at the expense of her aunt,

Miss Thornton frankly and fully forgave. Never could she bring herself to scold, far less to chastise, children under any circumstances, no matter how reprehensible might be their conduct.

“Children are so sensitive,” she was wont to say in her weak, helpless way, “that punishment is not only cruel, but in some cases positively dangerous. One can never tell how their spirit may be broken and crushed—how much mischief may be inflicted through ill-judged severity, and through a rude harsh shock to their finely strung nervous system.”

This convenient doctrine the children in question loudly applauded, and seized every opportunity of doing whatsoever found favour in their sight, relying on the considerate regard that would be shown to their delicate sensibilities, and firmly persuaded that their daring deeds would pass unheeded and unavenged.

Edwardes, having received information that the repairs of the Atlanta had been completed, and that she lay awaiting them in the harbour at Oran, urged an immediate departure, after Miss Thornton had indulged in lengthened encomiums on her prophetic soul for having all along seen through the hidden villainies of St. Bertrand and Azzahra, both of whom she regarded as little better than foul fiends clothed in human forms.

"Well, Somerton!" Edwardes exclaimed to Frederick. "Are you glad to get on the yacht again?"

But the young gentleman failed to regard the matter with the same enthusiasm as Edwardes, who felt proud of his vessel and longed to be back on board. Frederick's narrow escape from destruction at Chenoua had left on his mind a most unfavourable impression of yachting excursions, and he shrank with considerable dislike from any further temptation of Providence by seeking to encounter afresh the perils of the deep.

Besides, during the cruises he had already taken, the way in which the cutter had to be worked greatly interfered with his mental composure. She tacked so often that he had been perpetually forced to shift his place so as to avoid blows from the boom of the mainsail, and this had so sorely vexed his righteous soul that, replying to Edwardes, he gave vent to his annoyance in a lengthened dissertation on the superiority of steam over sailing vessels.

"I wonder," exclaimed he in conclusion, with thoughtless rudeness, as he continued to address Edwardes, "that you go about in a stupid old thing like the Atlanta, and waste weeks in trips you could make in a few days with a steamer. Were I you I should very soon cut the concern."

This unmannerly remark of the headstrong schoolboy Edwardes bore with great forbearance

and good temper, so as to elicit the warm approbation of all present.

Olinda felt deeply distressed at her brother's bad taste in offering such a glaring affront to the man of whose hospitality they were going to partake again so shortly. After severely admonishing the boy apart, she hastened to apologize to Edwardes; but he politely stopped her explanations, assuring her that he was willing to make every allowance for the lad's youth and inexperience.

"Upon my word, I believe I like the fellow all the better for his pluck," he kindly added. "Give me anything but your dull, plodding, awfully well-behaved boy—your ditch-water level. I hate people without life and spirit and originality. They are not worth conversing with. They are not worth feeding. They are not worth being granted permission to live. For what purpose, I want to know, are they sent into the world? What is their mission? What benefit do they confer on mankind beyond eating and drinking, thereby unconsciously doing good by patronising the butchers and bakers who supply them with their daily food? But is this sufficient excuse for their existence? Do they justify the labour expended in digging about them and supplying them with nutriment when they only cumber the ground? Believe me, it is an uncommonly moot point."

Going up to Frederick, he held out his hand with a friendly smile.

"I like you, youngster," he said in his off-hand manner, "because you have no nonsense in your composition. Humbug I detest. Whatever you do, never humbug. Always express your opinions openly, manfully, and you will be respected, although for the time, it may be, you provoke a momentary feeling of anger. A man will forgive being told the truth, albeit in an unpalatable form, as I frankly forgive you now; but he will not forgive being befooled and deceived by double-faced treachery. No, no! steer straight, my man. So will you pass well and honourably through life."

"You are not going to show the white feather, like this youngster?" asked the American of Miss Thornton, again pretending to bestow admiration on her personal attractions. "What would life avail without the fascinations of your charming society!"

"You are very good to think of me so favourably," she modestly replied, casting her eyes on the ground. "Your company affords me great pleasure also."

CHAPTER XVII.

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE.

“READ that!” ejaculated Henry, overcome with emotion, as he handed to Edwardes a letter he had just received. “It is a forgery, Edwardes. I swear it is. Never would my Azzahra have written thus.”

“No forgery is this,” argued Olinda, after reading the letter through. “In every line I recognise the undoubted handwriting of the hapless Child of the Desert.”

“Then did she write it under compulsion,” Wilton retorted.

“Under whose compulsion?” Olinda asked with an offended look.

“The compulsion of my deadly foe, Raoul de St. Bertrand,” answered Henry angrily, for he perceived that his silly, unstable, vacillating, infatuated cousin was still disposed to believe in the integrity of this wily, remorseless reprobate, and to take his part again, in spite of his base conduct and of her recent denunciations. Ever

he seemed to attract like the magnet, and to fascinate like the serpent.

"Nay, Henry, that is impossible," she answered in a soothing voice; for, notwithstanding his irritation, she pitied him at heart and wished to convince him that such a deadly blow could not have been aimed by Raoul. "Be reasonable and reflect. Read more carefully and less passionately and you will see that not only did Monsieur de St. Bertrand exercise no compulsion, but that furthermore he could not have approved of what the letter contained. Is it likely, I ask, that a man of his proud temperament would be a party to these vile unwarrantable animadversions on himself and on me?"

"That part is difficult of comprehension, I grant," Wilton resumed, after pausing some time to reflect. "Yet, on the other hand, is it possible that he would permit us to see these hostile expressions unless it suited his purpose?"

"Just what I think," added the American, "for that Azzahra wrote with the knowledge of this man, or even it may be at his dictation, appears to me as clear as the sun at noon. Remember she is a prisoner in his hands. Believe me, that fellow is playing some deep game that we are unable to fathom."

Though concurring fully, Edwardes shrewdly perceived at a glance how much it would conduce

to the interests of Olinda and her cousin that the genuineness of the document should be established, and he made the American a sign to desist. Could Wilton be convinced that the Arab was in truth dead, slain by her own hand—could he be convinced that her dying wish was for him to marry Olinda for his own welfare, as well as to keep his cousin out of temptations and snares—what happy results might follow. When Henry's tempest of woe and despair had blown past, and when Olinda's infatuation had subsided through separation from him in whose toils she still struggled, notwithstanding the warnings and the proofs of his baseness she had received, and notwithstanding the angry resentment against him she so lately expressed, might it not be hoped that this letter, whether genuine or forged, would bring forth fruit. In its authenticity Olinda believed already. Could Henry's suspicions be overcome, and could he likewise be made a believer, this voice from the grave could scarce fail to exercise a powerful influence over their future lives.

Impelled by these friendly considerations, Edwardes watched until, in the absence of the two principals, he was able to take the remainder into his confidence, and make them promise their hearty co-operation in seeking to convince Wilton that he had received a true voice from the grave.

pressible hankering after her worthless idol of clay. Well knew they it was Azzahra's expressed desire that she should forsake and renounce St. Bertrand which had so exasperated her, and had so filled her with unbridled indignation. Well knew they she still yearned to throw herself away upon the deceiving smooth-tongued flatterer, dazzled and dazed by the tinsel glitter of his pretended Heaven-born genius.

"Oh! would that this voice from the grave were hearkened to and obeyed!" they sighed. "Would that the headstrong, misguided pair were able to see their true interests! were able to walk in the paths of wisdom!"

Foremost in aspirations for the carrying out of the expiring Arab's injunctions was Alice Thornton, who with conscious pride pointed to her persistent advocacy of the union between the two cousins.

"Their marriage I always foretold," she warmly exclaimed, "and their marriage I foretell still."

"You speak as though you possessed the spirit of divination," observed Johnson. "Should your prophecy come true, we will roast you alive as a witch."

"I would endure a great deal for my dear nephew and niece," she fondly replied; "but even the thought of burning is too horrible."

"Not burning with love, though," interposed

the American in reply with a soft glance—a sentiment that much pleased the good lady and which she evidently shared. “The kindling fire of the soul, the consuming flame of passion, the torch of hymen,” he continued, “all are glorious and dear to the heart of man.”

“And the light of other days, too,” she added bashfully, under the impression that she had said something clever and touchingly tender.

“Very true, and also the light of the harem,” he added, no little amused at her imbecility.

That her prophecy might be fulfilled all anxiously desired, but agreed to wait passively and let time work out its accomplishment, when both had become calmer and both had learned to forget the past in looking forward to the future.

As Olinda and Wilton stood waiting to start for Oran, a French officer in uniform came down the street who turned away his head as he passed, conspicuously endeavouring to preserve his features from observation.

Uttering an exclamation, Henry pronounced him to be the man who, in the disguise of a Spahi, had dragged him off his horse at the boar hunt with the Ouled-Mimoum.

Simultaneously, Olinda declared that he was the commander of the gang that carried her off through the Pass of Hadja Roum, when Azzahra had so providentially appeared and come to the rescue.

“Alas! little gratitude is felt now for the rescuer,” he sorrowfully exclaimed. “Little commiserating sorrow exists for her deplorable suicide, goaded to madness by falsehood and treachery. Little thought is bestowed on her hopes or desires.”

As Olinda was about to protest, Henry asked the bystanders did they know who was the hussar just gone past.

“Captain Pécoul,” they replied, “the comrade and friend of the Marquis de St. Bertrand.”

Even Olinda could not refuse to believe now.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

MOURNFULLY Wilton embarked with his relatives to return to Europe, leaving behind the memories of such bright hopes and such blissful hours. Oh! how hard it is to break with the past? how cruel and heartless it seems to try! Does it not appear to the fond heart a sacred duty to nurture and keep alive its sorrowing recollections? to mourn for the departed? to preserve the dear image from being effaced? to weep over the silent grave, tending its flowers, brushing away with careful hand the mosses and lichens from its love-recording epitaph?

With what agonizing shame and remorse does memory recur to every heedless word or act that had pained the heart and brought tears to the eyes of the dear one gone for ever, when the past cannot be recalled, when forgiveness cannot be vouchsafed, and when repentance is too late!

By Henry this departure from the shores of Africa without even making a pilgrimage to the

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poor lonely tomb of Azzahra was regarded as almost a sacrilege and a crime, but he owned the wisdom of her solemn injunction to try and forget. Yet would his wounded spirit have found sweet consolation in grieving over where lay her mouldering form, and bedewing the spot with his tears.

Some favourite verses Olinda wrote as they strayed together long since in the country of St. Eugène at Algiers he had committed to memory. Over these in his gloomy solitude he now loved to ponder, and to bemoan the fate that withheld him from bestowing untired devoted solicitude and care on the resting-place of his Child of the Desert.

“FADING LOVE.

“Go through yon cemetery ; mark the tombs,
And thou wilt gain an insight into life.
Note well how all the graves but newly made
Are tended with a pious tender care.
The cherished plants and shrubs well trimmed
And fed with water every sultry day—
Fresh wreaths and bouquets ever on the tomb.
This while grief gnaws the heart, tears dim the eye,
While love still burns within the mourner’s breast.
Pass on. A sickening change thou wilt behold—
Index of wearied grief and waning love.
The once-prized flowers, scorched by the blazing sun,
Their place usurped by briars, grass, and weeds,
Immortelle wreaths faded and browned with age,
The stone with lichens and damp moss o’ergrown,
Even the wooden head-cross fallen down.
The contemplation of each saddening phase
In swiftly fading love these graves display,

Freezes the heart and fills the mind with doubts—
Raises contempt and hate for all mankind.
Alas ! that kindred, dearly, purely loved,
So soon can cease to weep and mourn our loss,
When the poor bubble of this life has burst ! ”

“FILIAL LOVE.

“ Within a cemetery once I strayed—
Not the foul, reeking graveyard of the town,
Exhaling noxious gas and pestilence,
But a green, placid, cool retreat
Upon a sloping bank, shaded by trees.
A young man near to where I sat approached ;
A watering-vessel in one hand he bore,
And in the other flowers beautiful and rare.
He knelt devoutly at a grave close by,
And I could see he often paused to weep,
While his lips moved in silent prayer.
Long time his mournful duties occupied.
When he had left, I ventured to the spot.
The bright and lovely plants upon the grave
Had just been watered by his careful hand—
It was a summer’s day of burning heat.
All the cut flowers he had brought with him
Were tastefully arranged in tiny cups
Plunged in the ground, and with fresh water filled ;
The weeds were plucked out and the earth made smooth ;
A fresh immortelle wreath was hanging up.
Oh, what a smiling, fondly-tended grave !
What a soul-cheering contrast this, I thought,
To the neglected tombs that lay around !
I looked up at the head-cross, freshly gilt,
To find what relative he prized so well.
It was his mother’s grave. She had been dead
Four years, and he was mourning yet ! ”

As time sped on, unchanged remained Wilton.
Still did he greedily clutch his miseries to his
heart, still did he refuse to be comforted.

But to Olinda a great change had come. The

recognition of Pécoul by herself and Henry as the leader in the dastardly outrage upon her, the knowledge that Raoul was his friend, the consequent inevitable conclusion, fortified by the many suspicious occurrences that had taken place and by the unanimous verdict of her friends that St. Bertrand was a party to the crime, removed the scales from her eyes at last, and made her see him in his true colours.

No longer his talents and his fascinating refinements of manner enthralled her. She looked on him as deserving only of contempt and abhorrence. The tie was snapped, the snare was broken, and she had escaped. So she believed.

How she wailed in sackcloth and ashes over her blind insensate folly ! how she despised herself, in despising the man she had so long honoured, but whose base, contemptible character had been now at last bared to view ! how she despised herself for honouring him so long ! for continuing ever to relapse into adoration of a spurious worthless idol, after her eyes had been so often opened !

On what a dreary shore had her talent-worship landed her ! into what a howling wilderness had it driven her ! into what an engulfing abyss had it plunged her !

Oh ! that the past could be recalled ! oh, that she had kept aloof from the flowery tongued deceiver, who so nearly accomplished her destruc-

tion ! had never hearkened to his flattering tales of love !

Compared with his low, animal nature, how Henry's noble qualities shone forth she realised when too late. The more she reflected, the more she prized her cousin ; the more she saw his great sterling worth ; the more she regretted what she had done. But, alas ! his love was gone, never to be regained. Cruelly had she wronged and injured him, she owned ; she had openly confessed to him that she regarded him as not her intellectual equal ; she had slighted, insulted, trampled on him ; she had scornfully rejected his suit ; she had transformed him into cold, unfeeling granite ; she had striven to forget him and to love another. In his alienation she was paying the penalty of her rash, inconsiderate self-sufficiency. She was reaping as she had sown.

Azzahra's warning voice asserted its sway. Olinda owned that St. Bertrand would never cease from troubling ; would never let her be at rest ; would never lose an opportunity of renewing his importunities. Either she must relinquish her cherished visits to the Villa Isly, or she must return to Algiers a married woman with one by her side able and willing to protect from persecution.

Poor Azzahra ! In sorrow she dwelt on how she had misunderstood her intentions, how she

had unjustifiably received in a tempest of anger the warning words of the wronged and slandered Desert Child. What senseless unappreciation of worth, what unworthy ingratitude had she displayed! Alas! the unhappy daughter of Africa, once so despised, proved nobler and truer than had she, with all her vaunted advantages.

Grief for the past, despair for the future, overwhelmed her. Where she had of old resented interference, in this her hour of trouble she sought comfort and advice. To Alice Thornton she laid bare her heart, imploring aid and guidance out of the entanglements and bewilderments that surrounded her path.

With thankfulness that Olinda had strayed back to the realms of truth and soberness, and had cast off the spell of illusive perversity, the benevolent old lady took her niece in her arms, shedding tears of heartfelt joy.

That reason and wisdom pointed to an alliance with Wilton as the happiest solution of her niece's difficulties, Alice Thornton warmly urged. In her judgment, Olinda's ill-omened attachment for St. Bertrand his detected villainy had happily expunged, and she believed Olinda was free—free to wed one who would be a loyal, honourable, and devoted protector through life.

Alas! vain and delusive are the hopes of would-be friends reasoning in blindness and ignorance! Though outwardly free, does it

follow as a logical sequence that the heart must be free also ?

For the sake of Henry likewise, Miss Thornton added, in her idiotic stupidity, she devoutly desired such a consummation. The unyielding, abstracted lamentation in which he continued steeped was pitiable to behold, and to Olinda's gentle soothing care alone could she look to heal the broken spirit, to raise the bruised reed, and to quench the smoking flax.

Humbly Olinda replied, her pride, her vain-gloriousness, her talent-worship dispelled, and scattered to the winds for ever, as she believed. In deep contrition she owned how they had misled her, and on what destroying quicksands she had like to be cast through their baneful influence.

How fatally she misjudged herself, how futile would be her good resolutions, how short-lived would be her amendment and her renunciation of folly, how her fatal weakness would again return in the hour of temptation, and how the destroyer would again seize her in his iron vice, time was to reveal.

Persuaded, however, of the depth and duration of the transformation within, persuaded of the purity of her intentions, persuaded that love for St. Bertrand had been rooted out of her heart by the discovery of his villainy, and eager to retrace her misguided steps that she might find a place

for repentance which she sought carefully with tears, she told how she had been taught wisdom in the school of adversity, how she had learned to appreciate Henry's noble, generous, manly virtues, and how she would gladly, thankfully surrender into his keeping her liberty, her honour, and her life.

"But his love, alas! never can be mine," she sorrowfully added. "The memory of his lost Child of the Desert will ever haunt his mind; her image will ever rise up, spectre-like, between; his heart will ever be with her. Strive how I might and would to do my duty and act as should an affectionate wife, the barrier could not be broken down, the gulf could not be bridged over."

She spake the words of wisdom and truth. But this the shallow-headed Alice Thornton and the giddy volatile Geraldine could not understand. They gave Olinda no peace, preaching unceasingly that her gentle lovingness would presently thaw and soften the mourner's heart, and dispel from around him the darkling clouds of melancholy.

After many days Miss Thornton, troublesome, mischievous, and intermeddling, took courage to address her bereft nephew on the project so dear to her wishes, announcing Olinda's willingness, and urging the need he had of one who would give him consolation and love.

Listlessly, almost submissively, he yielded to the solicitations of his aunt and his beloved sister, for he called to mind Azzahra's dying command, but he charged them to tell Olinda from him that where his treasure was there would his heart be also—that after his plighted Arab bride he still would mourn; that he never could blot out from remembrance his betrayed, foully slain Child of the Desert.

“But I will try, Olinda,” he said when they met. “Earnestly, loyally, will I strive to give you my love.”

“And earnestly, loyally, will I strive to deserve it,” she replied.

So it came to pass that when the year was ended and Henry's time of mourning for Azzahra was over, the two were made one in the eye of religion, though they remained two in the eye of reason. Still he contrasted his wife unfavourably with the gentle fond Azzahra; still she, though sorely humbled in spirit by the teachings of experience, contrasted unfavourably her husband with the gay and brilliant St. Bertrand. He regretted that the idol he had worshipped had been ruthlessly torn from him. She regretted that the idol she had worshipped had been hurled from its pedestal and trampled under foot.

Of what wicked, irremediable cruelty are those guilty who drag together and seek to weld into

one reluctant spirits, undestined for union or communion! Where sympathy exists not, where instinct tells that the blessings of happiness can never reign, is it not barbarous to urge on two victims the false smiles, the hollow truce, the organized hypocrisy of an unholy, unblessed alliance? Should not rather a red-hot ploughshare be driven between, to sever and dash them asunder?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DERDEBA.

VAIN were the fond, ceaseless attempts of her sorrowing mother and her faithful attendant to pour balm into the wounds of Azzahra, or to calm her bleeding, troubled spirit. Months rolled by in dismal, joyless succession, and still she mourned and wept. Still she pined in patient silence, withering away like a faded flower.

Without cessation or intermission she dwelt on the one theme, wondering whether her Christian lover remained true, or whether he had fallen into the snare so insidiously laid—with her connivance, alas! and through her agency—by her base unprincipled brother.

Presently arrived intelligence rapidly spread over the Desert that Selim Mustapha was a captive, decoyed and arrested through the treachery of Yakoub in the Sahel, who thereby earned his release from the prison into which he had been cast by the perjured Raoul.

Here came a fresh stab into Azzahra's wounded heart. In the dutiful hope of shielding her parent, she had written that dreadful letter—that vile tissue of falsehood and perjury ; she had sacrificed herself on the altar of filial piety ; she had cast away the love that was hers only ; she had flung happiness to the winds, and drawn down bitter woe on her head—all for what ? For no purpose, alas ! now that her parent had been sacrificed, than to aid and abet in the destruction of the man she loved so well ; to dupe him, deceive him, impel him to his doom by her false, perfidious letter. For would not a loveless life, chained to one for whom he cared not, entail endless misery ? would it not be a living death ?

Her base selfishness rose up in judgment against her, as she brooded on what she had done. Vainly she strove to deceive herself, pleading that she had written under the hostile influences of compulsion and fear, and with the laudable purpose of screening her parent. No consideration, either for her father's safety or her own, she owned in despondent distraction, should have made her practise such gross calamity-entailing dissimulation. She should have waited for the future to unfold itself. Rightly had she been rewarded, she exclaimed to herself ; richly had she deserved to be made the victim of perfidious, heartless deception, through her want of

faith in her beloved Christian, through her precipitancy in reckoning herself doomed to be forsaken by reason of the crimes imputed. When too late, she comprehended this, and comprehended also that St. Bertrand would have yielded and spared her, sooner than see disgrace inflicted upon his father's favourite offspring. He had foregone his demand for the betrayal of Selim Mustapha: in like manner would he have foregone his demand for the betrayal of her lover.

Oh! that her hated letter had never been dispatched! Without it her own safety was already secured, and through perfidy it had failed to procure the safety of her father. Its only effect was to blast the life of him she dearly cherished. This she thought, not comprehending the covert purport of the fatal writing, nor how her scheming brother's real object was to betray and destroy the unsuspecting fair woman she adored and honoured.

Ah! could she have told how Olinda was crossing her path and betraying her even while she spake, little would she have cared whether the fair woman was betrayed in turn or not. Little would she have cared what fate awaited one guilty towards her of such lovelessness and ingratitude.

Ayesha resolved she would seek St. Bertrand once again at Algiers, to plead with him and intercede for the life and liberty of the husband

she had outraged; and Azzahra accompanied her, hoping to gain tidings of her beloved Christian, though well she knew that, with the faithless swallows, he must long since have passed away to Europe from the burning shores of Africa.

In her wild desire for intelligence of him she loved, she appealed to Kredoudja on their arrival at Algiers, and implored of the Negress to take her to the Derdeba of her people, that she might inquire of her fate from the Evil Spirits through the mediums in the Djelep. To this she was strongly impelled by Ayesha, who believed unswervingly in the efficacy and virtue of the mystic rites.

Delighted, the Soudanese informed her that the ceremony would shortly take place; and, on the day named, they repaired to the Rue Kata-randjil.

On their arrival they learned that the Derdeba had already commenced, and that the preparations were complete for beginning the Djelep—the magical process by which the Evil Spirits are induced to enter into the bodies of the soothsayers.

The Kaïd-lans-Fan, the chief of the Negroes, who conducted the ceremonies, now approached Azzahra, vouchsafing her his permission to be present and take part in the Derdeba, she in return presenting him with a handsome offering of money, under Kredoudja's directions.

He then conducted her and her attendant, with

much ceremony, into a room furnished with cushions and carpets, and concealed from view by a *portière* curtain, where they found a large audience already collected, awaiting their turn to be ushered into the central court of the house, and to join in the mysteries of the Djelep.

In an adjoining chamber, those of the Negresses who had the faculty of becoming "possessed" and so turned into mediums had passed the previous night, attended by an old man and an old woman learned in magic, under whose charge and superintendence they were placed by the Kaïd-lans-Fan.

There they still remained, undergoing preparation for the approaching ceremony. They had taken off their blue-striped burnouses, and were richly attired in gauze and silk dresses, embroidered in silver and gold, their hair covered with a profusion of gay bright flowers.

At a signal from the Kaïd-lans-Fan, two of these mediums, attended by several other gaily dressed Negresses, were led out into the carefully cleaned hall, where a band of thirty Negro musicians sat crouched down on the ground under the staircase leading up to the galleries above, with a small piece of carpet laid down in front of them, on which to receive the contributions of the worshippers.

The Kaïd-lans-Fan now summoned forth Az-zahra first, as a mark of distinction, perceiving

that she was acquainted through her attendant with the inmates of the house.

Lifting up the *portière*, she and Kredoudja stepped out into the court barefooted, for on these occasions the feet must be uncovered.

In the centre of the hall stood a brazier filled with burning coals, over which was placed a huge smoking caldron, containing four fowls that had been boiling in it for some hours.

Towards this caldron the two aged magicians advanced : one threw in a quantity of mysterious ingredients, including sambel and calcari, stirring up without ceasing the wonderful compound, and uttering all the time the wildest imprecations.

With this concoction they anointed the bodies of the mediums, whose joints they likewise rubbed with the blood of the slaughtered fowls.

After this process was completed, the mediums were clothed in long caftans extending to their feet, crimson belts encircled their slender waists, and on their heads were placed caps covered with small pendant shells, to make a loud rattling noise in the forthcoming dance.

Finally, the magicians perfumed them, anointing them once more with the demon-broth out of the seething caldron, and then the Djelep commenced.

Terrific was the deafening din now set up by the thirty Negro musicians under the stairs, who

vigorously maintained, without a moment's cessation, a dismal squalling and beating of tom-toms, utterly regardless of air or melody. Noise—nothing but unmeaning, outlandish noise—seemed the sole *desideratum* in the lugubrious performance.

Now, in cadence with this monotonous drone, the mediums began to dance—at first gently, but presently their movements, carefully copied by the other dancing Negresses, became more rapid and animated. In fine, intoxicated with wild enthusiasm, rapt and frenzied with intense excitement, they flung themselves about in inconceivable evolutions, though keeping time perpetually with the rhythmical measure of the music, and swaying their bodies to and fro in a succession of graceful poses.

At length one of the chief dancers uttered a loud scream, and began to display frightful contortions of her body and face.

Upon this, the uproarious vigour of the musicians redoubled, and the rapidity of the dancer's movements increased, until she fell down senseless on the ground in a deep swoon.

Azzahra was greatly alarmed on seeing this, and wanted to rush across the marble floor to the assistance of the prostrate girl; but Kredoudja forcibly held her back, assuring her it was forbidden to the uninitiated to interrupt the proceedings.

By this time the medium was frothing at the mouth and writhing on the ground, as though seized by a fit of epilepsy. All colour had left her parched lips, her eyes rolled with a ghastly glare. She was gasping for breath, and uttered yells of despair, terrible to witness.

The Kaïd-lans-Fan now approached Azzahra, to inform her that the Demon had entered into the medium, who had become thoroughly "possessed," and was competent to read every event of the future.

Then, at the last, Azzahra's courage vanished. She trembled at her reckless daring in seeking to unravel the unknown by means of such awful rites—rites she had been taught to look upon as sacrilegious and sinful. Until she came to believe in their truth, she thought of them with little apprehension. She looked upon their observance as a harmless experiment. Now, for the first time, she beheld these strange solemnities in their awful reality. The worship of the Djins at the Ayoun-beni-Menad was totally different in character. There nothing tended to awaken alarm, even in a nervous sensitive nature like hers; but the weird mysterious scene she gazed on now filled her with abject terror, and froze her very soul within her.

Like a statue, with wildly staring eye, with distended nostril, with parted lip, she stood speechless, motionless, her delicate bare feet

resting on the cold hard pavement beside the pitiable object that continued to writhe in convulsive agony, to gasp for breath, and to utter wild piercing shrieks.

But Kredoudja promptly sprang forward to arouse her from this reverie of fear and stupor, reminding her that longer delay would be fatal, as the Evil Spirit would of a surety depart from the "possessed," and so would be lost the opportunity for ascertaining her destiny.

With a strong effort Azzahra shook off her alarm, and, instructed by Kredoudja, proceeded to inquire her fate from the demon within the medium, after the spectators had withdrawn sufficiently far not to overhear what passed.

"Oh! mighty spirit!" she whispered, with trembling voice in the ear of the "possessed" Negress, "deign to open before me the Book of Destiny, so that I may read my future fate?"

"Ask what questions you will, and they shall be answered," returned a hoarse bass voice, that seemed to issue from the prostrate girl, as from some deep-seated cavern.

"Nothing is hidden from you, I know," Azzahra went on, "nothing is secret. My heart lies bare before you. You see that I love?"

"Yes, you love to distraction."

"And my love, is it requited?"

"It is returned—madly."

"Heaven be praised!" thankfully murmured

Azzahra. "Oh! how truly I divined that his dear heart was still mine!"

"Does he I love remain on the shores of Africa, or has he departed for Europe?" she proceeded.

"He has gone far away, but he will return ere long."

"Return to me? to claim me as his bride, and make me his own for ever?"

"To make you his own for ever—even until death."

"What glorious tidings!" exclaimed the excited girl, in an ecstasy of frantic delight.

She then inquired as a test question what was the creed of her lover, and whether he belonged to the religion of the Mahometans or the Christians.

Before a reply was vouchsafed, considerable hesitation and a long pause ensued, during which the Kaïd-lans-Fan turned a scrutinising, searching look on Kredoudja.

At length came the answer: "He is a Christian."

Azzahra fancied the lips of the Kaïd-lans-Fan moved while the spirit spake—once she even imagined the voice came from close to where he stood—but she knew she was mistaken.

"And now, great Djin!" Azzahra continued, "bestow on me in pity your counsel. You tell me he will return to claim me. Shall I then

wait to let him seek me out, or shall I fly to his arms, imploring mercy and forgiveness for all I have done?"

"You will speak with him here," the voice replied; "but you will see him first far hence."

"Oh! what joy!" she enthusiastically exclaimed, clapping her hands with delight. "I shall speak with him again."

"But take heed," interposed the Evil Spirit. "There is a fair woman of whom you must beware. She is crossing your path even now, but you will cross her path in return."

"And will she never after cross my path again?" Azzahra eagerly demanded.

"Never. She will not succeed against you. At the last, you will triumph to the end of your life."

"Oh! what would you imply, great Djinn, by saying I would triumph only to the end of my life?" she inquiringly gasped forth. "Surely she would not triumph over me in death? Surely, should I die, my Christian lover would not outrage my memory by taking to him another wife to blot me out of his remembrance?"

"She will not triumph over you in death, but she has triumphed over you in life," solemnly responded the Djinn.

"Has triumphed over me?" shrieked Azzahra. "Are they then man and wife?"

"I have spoken. Ask no more," the voice

answered, while the "possessed" displayed symptoms of returning consciousness.

The Kaïd-lans-Fan, hereupon coming forward, told Azzahra that the demon was fast departing out of the body of the Negress, and could not further be consulted. No more could she discover, until the demon had been induced to enter into another medium by means of a fresh Djelep.

"But," added he, smiling, "you had doubtless abundance of time to obtain the information you wanted. I know well what fair ladies like you come here to learn."

Then, perceiving that she wept, he joined Kredoudja in comforting her and assuring her that he considered her Djelep singularly fortunate since the spirit declared she would ultimately triumph, for Kredoudja had told him all the demon said.

He now gave directions for removing the possessed into the adjoining chamber, that she might have restoratives administered, to recover her out of the mental and bodily prostration into which the trance and the demon-dance had thrown her.

She was still much enfeebled, and had to be assisted across the court by several attendant Negresses. Although the horrible, unhuman expression had vanished from her features, it had left behind a vacant, unmeaning glare, which was almost as painful to behold.

A fresh medium was quickly brought out from behind the *portière* by the Kaïd-lans-Fan, whose Djelep dance Azzahra and Kredoudja were allowed to remain and witness.

Azzahra expected that the musicians would have been fatigued after the last Djelep, and likewise the supernumerary negresses who danced around the former medium to stimulate and encourage her; but, to her surprise, all were as lively as when they commenced, and prepared for a repetition of the performance.

Notwithstanding the zeal, however, of all concerned, the devils this time were refractory, and long refused with obstinate pertinacity to enter in.

Twice the medium fell down in a swoon, exhausted by excitement, but no contortions of her body or features followed. Her eyes rolled not—she frothed not at the mouth. Wherefore the Kaïd-lans-Fan pronounced that she was not “possessed” with the evil spirit, and all had to be commenced afresh.

At length, on a sign from the chief that the favourable symptoms were beginning to appear, dancers and musicians vied in energy, and their efforts were soon rewarded by seeing the medium fling herself on the ground in a wild ecstasy of frenzy, rolling wildly from side to side and her lips covered with foam.

After the ceremony of consulting this demon was finished, the result of which appeared to give unbounded pleasure to the fair worshipper, Azzahra took leave of the Kaïd-lans-Fan and the humble owners of the house, bestowing a liberal proof of how keenly she had appreciated the Derdeba.

This strange, wild ceremonial produced a wondrous revulsion of feeling in Azzahra's mind, chiefly by reason of the omniscience "the possessed" appeared to reveal. For how was it possible that her lover's religion should be known save by supernatural revelation? The medium had never seen nor heard of her before. Besides, the wretched contorted creature was senseless at the moment. The deep voice, again, was not the woman's voice of the medium.

Azzahra held these to be weighty arguments; to her they proved incontestably that she had been in direct communication with a supernatural power. The scene at the Ayoun-beni-Menad had deeply impressed her, and so had the too-often realised predictions of Kredoudja's black sorceress about the fair woman, but no voice had come until now from the land of the unknown.

So deeply impressed had she become by these magic solemnities—so firmly did she believe in their reality and truth—so unswerv-

ingly did she own the power of divination possessed by the medium—that all her preconceived orthodox convictions were rudely scattered to the winds, and she was a confirmed convert to the Pagan superstitions of the Blacks. The false prejudices instilled in early childhood cropped up again to the surface and asserted their sway. Before them reason and the precepts of after years fled away, vanishing like snow on the hill-top before the summer's sun. So hard the task to eradicate and destroy the impressions of youthful days!

The joy of Kredoudja was excessive, as she heard her young mistress, on their way to the home of Ayesha, express firm belief in the power and omniscience of the Genii, and her contentment with the result of the Djelep.

“Could any of mortal mould discover him I love to be a Christian, knowing nought about him, nor who he is?” Azzahra enthusiastically exclaimed, for she considered this a crucial test, having failed to observe how her face and Kredoudja's had been watched by the Kaïd-lans-Fan, and their expression carefully noted. “Of a surety this knowledge must have been revealed by supernatural means, and it stamps the wondrous ceremony with the indelible marks of truth.”

“Oh! Kredoudja! what joy to know he loves

me yet, in return for my boundless love!" she exclaimed, wild with intoxicating rapture. "To know he will be mine, wholly and solely, his love unshared by others! Is not this a glorious discovery?"

CHAPTER XX.

TRIUMPHS.

AT the Villa Isly Alice Thornton and Geraldine were giving a joyous welcome to the bride and bridegroom—the “happy couple,” as courtesy designates in conventional *parlance* the *nouveaux mariés*.

But Henry and Olinda were not happy. A glacier-like barrier stretched between, impassable, and which could not be thawed. He remained absorbed in moody, lethargic torpor, while she daily lost heart, and began to relinquish hope of winning back his love or rescuing him from his despondent gloom.

With repugnance and evil forebodings he returned to the scenes of his troubles—to where he had met the great misfortune of his life. He shrank from having his wounds torn open, and from being tortured afresh. Olinda, however, determined to go; and, through his apathetic indifference and her greed for authority, Olinda ruled.

Not long had they arrived at the Villa Isly when an urgent summons recalled Henry to Europe, and his bride was left alone.

Raoul St. Bertrand was in Algiers, Wilton knew, but he went away harbouring no apprehension of ill, for Olinda was securely protected by her marriage, he fondly believed, from the insidious temptations of his old enemy.

This likewise Olinda herself believed. But she knew not that herein lay her danger; she knew not that for this consummation her arch persecutor had laboured with consummate, deadly, unfaltering skill; she knew not that the old craving for his allurements would return in the hour of trial, notwithstanding the gross wrongs he had done; she knew not he would triumph. Of what avail are marriage vows in resisting sweet temptation?

She and Geraldine stood one day admiring the fair prospect from the road that winds up the Mustapha Supérieur hills, when, gaily conversing and laughing, St. Bertrand and Auguste Pécoul emerged from a steep paved lane of evident antiquity, shaded over with branching trees, that struck straight up the brow.

The moment he perceived his intended victim, he came forward to welcome her back to the lands of the south. But Olinda coldly received his salutation, answering him not.

“What has occurred, Miss Somerton, to call

for this reception?" he inquired with a look of mortified surprise. "What have I done to offend you?"

"What have you done to offend me?" she echoed scornfully. "What have you not done to offend me, to outrage me, and to wrong me? All is known to me, Monsieur de St. Bertrand. I know that the outrage on me was planned by you, in spite of your asseverations of innocence. I know that the man beside you was he who dragged me away with cowardly, unmannerly violence, basely and heartlessly employed by you."

"You are under some unfortunate misapprehension," interrupted Pécoul, a bland smile of ready assurance playing over his false features as he protested against the accusation. "Never until this moment had I the honour of seeing Mademoiselle."

"Try not, sir, to deceive with such bare-faced effrontery," angrily answered Olinda. "My husband and I both knew you in Tlemcen to be one of the pretended Spahis at Hadja Roum."

These words were as nectar to the lips of St. Bertrand. He rejoiced to see her angry and give vent to her anger; for well he knew that with woman this is the prelude to reaction, and that when her wrath is expended she is helpless as the bird taken in the snare of the hunter.

But still more he rejoiced to hear she was

married, and to one with whom she must be wretched; to hear his carefully prepared schemes had borne goodly fruit; and to feel that after the arduous struggle victory seemed possible at last.

But a heavy blow had been struck against him which would have foiled and discomfited any man with less tenacity of purpose, and with a less indomitable will. The damage wrought by that blow must be made good ere he could hope to win. To find his cherished schemes detected and exposed by the accidental recognition of Pécoul, to find his attack foiled and frustrated when on the point of success, launched him into difficulties from which it needed all his diplomacy to escape unscathed.

In playing a bold game he saw his sole chance of safety lay, and the bold game he played.

He confessed all, vowing, like the hunch-backed Richard, how impassioned love for her, love that death alone could quench, had driven him to commit the daring act of unjustifiable insanity, and throwing himself on her mercy for pardon.

"Wild desire to possess you, Olinda, which I felt powerless to resist, impelled me onward in blind infatuation," he continued. "I dreamed that shortly you would have learned to forgive me, for the sake of the tender imperishable devotion I bear you. Well could I perceive

your friends sought to force on you an unwelcome marriage, and I dreamed that I was securing your happiness by rescuing you from one whose undying devotion to a rival must fill you with ever-present, maddening jealousy."

To these fulsome strains Olinda listened, soothed, flattered, and softened, instead of stamping her heel, with virtuous indignation, on the head of the serpent, as she would have done had true love and respect for her husband been in her.

"Well can I perceive, alas! dearest Olinda," the reptile-like deceiver continued, pursuing the advantage he saw he had gained, "that happiness has not blessed your union. Well can I perceive that in secret you pine over the loveless lot to which you are doomed. Ah! would that fortune had otherwise decreed! Would that the ill-starred intervention of Azzahra had not withheld Pécoul from leading you to where, for ever, we should have been united, and been all in all to each other!"

At the mention of Azzahra's name, Olinda longed to ask after the poor Desert Child's melancholy death, but she felt that such enthusiastic love-strains as her lover was pouring forth ought not to be broken in upon and stopped by irrelevant topics. His declarations of deep penitence for his crime and of his imperishable adoration were so sweet and so welcome to

listen to that her heart shrank from interrupting their delicious lulling flow.

Forgetful of duty and honour, and thinking only of transient enjoyment, she allowed this man to address language to her that she herself would have been the first to condemn, but for the fascinating, controlling power he wielded over her weak, vain, flattery-loving nature. Like the benighted traveller in the ice-clad hills, who sinks down and yields to the wooing enjoyment of slumber, from which he will never awake, so she succumbed to the intoxicating delirium that was leading her down to the bottomless pit of destruction.

She listened, and she longed to listen again ; she longed even to open her breast as to her confessor, to lay bare the wrongs and sorrows that oppressed her.

So it happened that they often met.

When he deemed the ground sufficiently prepared, he cautiously approached again with subtlety the subject of her married life, deploring the state of unhappiness in which he could see she was plunged, imploring her to bestow on him her confidence, and to open her mind to him, as her warm sincere friend—though now, alas ! they never could be united.

The bait, so carefully, so daintily dressed, she could not refrain from seizing and swallowing with avidity.

“Alas! with my husband I am not, and never can be, happy,” exclaimed the poor, silly moth, fluttering round the light of the dazzling lamp that was to scorch her to death. “Hard have I striven to regain the lost love; hard have I striven to discharge my duty, to wean him from his silent moroseness, to bring back the smile to his lip, to make him forget his love for Azzahra’s memory in love, or at least outward respect, for his neglected, forgotten wife; but vain, alas! is the struggle. That Child of the Desert will reign supreme in his affections, till effaced by the hand of death. Never, while he lives, will he cease to love her and to dwell on her memory.”

“A convicted murderess! the companion of assassins, wreckers, and robbers! the child of a rebel outlaw!—the very scum of the earth!—preferred openly, unblushingly, before you, who by your brilliant gifts are fit to shine in the highest circles, and to eclipse all rivals!” he ejaculated in well-feigned amazement. “Oh! the thought is too horrible to dwell upon; it makes one shudder; it overpowers with virtuous indignation. And do you allow such things to be?” he went on, as though overcome by the strength of his emotions, and his chivalrous desire to befriend her. “Do you tamely submit to these wrongs? Do you not resentfully cry out against such unmanly, such insulting outrages?”

"No sympathizing ear is there, alas!" she tearfully murmured, "into which I can pour my woes. When I complain of the neglectful desertion and the lovelessness to which I am doomed, friends tell me to bear with these trials as duty demands, and to pray for brighter days."

"And do you follow this spiritless, contemptible advice?" he demanded.

"What, alas! can I do?" she answered piteously, casting on him a despairing look.

"What can you do?" he echoed, as though astonished at her dulness of comprehension. "Fly, of course; fly from a life of shame and degradation."

"But whither should I fly?" she asked, feigning not to comprehend what he implied, though a deep blush told how clearly she read his thoughts.

"With me, my own dearest Olinda," he fondly replied, seizing and pressing her hand within his. "Fly with me, and we shall ever be together, loving and being loved. Fly from one who values not the priceless treasure he possesses to the arms of him that prizes you above all the world."

"Ask it not; you know you want to lead me into what is wicked and sinful," she pleaded—but so faintly that it required not St. Bertrand's quick comprehension to understand that the protest could be readily overcome.

“Were it wicked or sinful,” argued the wily casuist, “not for one moment, dearest, would I entertain the thought. Well you know how our attachment has ever been Platonic. Then why should it not be Platonic still? Why should we not live together in blissful communion, yet without sin?”

“What would the world say?” Olinda asked. “The cold, censorious, unæsthetic world would refuse to believe in the purity of our love.”

“Those who love truly,” he answered, “must learn to set the world at defiance, when it crosses their path. Short is life, and it behoves us to cull its sweets—above all, the delicious sweets of love—ere they fade and turn to decay. But the world is not so cruel and unreasonable as you would make believe,” he added, while she, in her blindness, refused to see the trail of the serpent. “You forget how, in the days when the Christian Church flourished throughout Northern Africa, virtuous monks and virgin nuns retired to the Libyan Desert to live together, and even share each other’s couches, with the holy purpose of proving that they could put to shame and trample upon Satan by keeping their sacred vows of celibacy, though under the most burning and cruel temptations. And did the world ever throw doubt upon their glorious triumph of virtue? Well you know they died in the very odour of sanctity, held up to future generations

as noble, though inimitable, examples of how man can mortify the flesh. Again, in my country, the Abbey of Fontevrault, near the Loire, was occupied by both nuns and monks, who were governed by a Mother Abbess, and who passed holy lives together in godly simplicity and contentment."

"But know you not the sequel?" she asked to his chagrin, for he took for granted she was ignorant of the matter.

"I went through the school of military equitation at Saumur, close by," he carelessly replied. "So to me all the circumstances about the Abbey are familiar."

"Then you are aware that, in consequence of the scandal and disgrace brought upon the neighbourhood," continued Olinda, "Fontevrault was closed, and its profligate inmates were scattered abroad."

"Vile, blasphemous calumnies!" he answered, annoyed at this overthrow of his arguments. "The work of our *sacré* religion-destroying revolution! Our lives, however, dearest, will be pure and holy," he went on; "let the base, unbelieving, sin-steeped world comment how it may."

But perceiving that even Olinda looked upon this programme as mythical and doubtful of accomplishment, he unfolded to her too-willing ears the diabolical plan he had matured, not to

carry it into execution, but wherewith to entrap her.

“Do you not see that our flight must lead to divorce?” he said. “In your Church marriage can be annulled, though in mine it continues binding until death. Our time of probation, therefore, would be but short. With you free, what should keep us asunder?”

Finding she remonstrated not, and remained with her eyes cast down, drawing with her parasol imaginary figures on the ground, he knew he had triumphed; and seizing her in his arms, imprinted frantic, impassioned kisses on her willing lips.

Then a voice from a thicket at hand exclaimed, “For shame! for shame!”

“Heard you that voice?” screamed Olinda, hanging in fright on her lover’s arm. “It was the voice of Azzahra.”

“You believe in ghosts, then?” he said, with a smile of assumed levity. “Poor Azzahra’s voice will never be heard more.”

Then the two matured their wicked designs, Olinda promising in her weak besotted infatuation, and in defiance of the warning voice within, to be in readiness for departure so soon as he could procure leave of absence from his regiment, to bear her away to her new life. But unforeseen obstructions arose, and St. Bertrand obtained not the permission he sought.

Then, one day, when the lovers were in daily expectation that the hour of deliverance was at hand, Wilton came back.

"Where is Olinda?" he asked, as he entered the Villa Isly and saw her not.

Ah! where was she? No reply came, and impatiently he repeated his question.

Geraldine burst into tears, and told all, told that Olinda's unfortunate attachment for the French hussar had been renewed, told that even now she was in St. Bertrand's house.

To the unhappy husband these revelations appeared incredible, yet he could not refuse to believe his sister's word. In horror he demanded why such iniquity had not been stopped; why he had not been recalled.

"Alas! Olinda overawed my aunt," mournfully replied Geraldine. "She deprecated all interference, insisting that you should not be turned against your wife through what she called vague, idle, groundless accusations."

Then with a dejected humbled heart, after warning Geraldine to keep silence, Wilton hastened to the Boulevard de l'Impératrice and watched at the house described by his sister, observing from where he could not be observed. Too true was what Geraldine had told. Shortly he beheld the traitorous wife of his bosom and his deadly foe issue forth together. After affectionate leave-takings the two separated, she

turning in the direction of the Villa Isly, and he hastening towards the Place du Gouvernement, to meet his friend Pécoul.

Thither Henry followed. A large assemblage were hastening to listen to a military band that played in the square, among whom the hussar gaily lounged, along with his comrade. Where the throng was thickest, and in the midst of St. Bertrand's friends and brothers in arms, Wilton went up to his betrayer and struck him a smart blow across the cheek with a heavy riding-whip he carried in his hand.

"When challenged to fight in the Sahara, you declined, on the plea that no compatriot was at hand to act as your second," he calmly said to St. Bertrand. "After this public insult, and with that tell-tale welt rising upon your face, you can scarce venture to play the coward again. No longer will your old pretext avail, in the presence of so many brother officers, ready to come out along with you as a friend."

Then wearily and sadly Wilton bent his steps back to the Villa Isly, to play the hypocrite with his perjured wife, and to let her play the hypocrite with him, as though nought had occurred.

The painful scene of dissimulation and mutual deception, fortunately for both, was broken in upon by unexpected arrivals. The Atlanta had come from Europe with Edwardes and Johnson

on board, who hastened to seek out their old friends on the Isly hills.

Much to the American's vexation, who looked on himself as a mighty authority in such delicate matters, Wilton placed his honour in Edwardes's hands, telling him how it was arranged that on the morrow he and the Frenchman should have a hostile meeting.

To the Hammah, along the sea-shore near the Jardin d'Essai, where the Blacks hold their Festival of the Aïd-el-Foul, or Feast of Beans, in honour of Sidi-Belal, the principals and their seconds repaired by appointment at early morn.

On the first interchange of shots, Henry received a slight wound, whereupon Edwardes desired to stop the duel; but Pécoul, on the part of his principal, declared that the combat must be *à outrance*, for death alone could expiate the offence that Henry had perpetrated.

Edwardes thought Wilton's opponent was the one for whose conduct death should atone; and so did St. Bertrand himself in his trembling heart, who would gladly have withdrawn from the strife, did not fear for the reproaches and ridicule of his companions forbid.

Again they fired, when, uttering a loud exclamation of pain and pressing his hand to his side, the hussar dropped on the ground, mortally wounded. While writhing in dying torture, he motioned to Henry to approach.

"You stand there as my conqueror," he exclaimed, vainly trying to rise. "You have triumphed over me, but I have likewise triumphed over you. Your false wife will tell that she erred not—will tell that our love was innocent and Platonic. But be not fooled by such vain imaginations. Believe her not. Believe not but that I have triumphed!"

He paused to recover strength, and to gloat over the mental agony he saw his slayer was enduring. Then he resumed, the fire of deadly, revengeful passion struggling to flash once more from his fast-glazing eye.

"Again have I triumphed over you, though you knew it not," he gasped in convulsive efforts, as his strength failed and life ebbed away; "Azzahra lives."

As savagely he glared at the speechless despair of his enemy, a faint, sickly smile of victory and of malignant hatred crept over his blanched features. Then, exhausted, he sank down, uttering a deep groan, and he was no more. His black, polluted spirit had fled from earth to the realms of the unknown.

Could such enter the regions of peace and love? Could such inhabit the mansions of the blessed? Must he not seem a barbarian to the inmates? Must not they seem barbarians unto him? Boundless is the mercy above, even for the worst and the vilest; but would it not be a

curse, rather than a blessing, to place such as St. Bertrand in abodes of bliss with all new and strange around; all, in his eyes, tame, unappreciated, and wearisome? Would not the torments of beholding happiness he could neither enjoy nor comprehend be almost as intolerable as the torments of perdition?

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER.

WHEN all was still, a veiled figure rose from her place of concealment, and advanced to where Wilton stood with folded arms, musing abstractedly over what he had done, surveying his fallen lifeless enemy, wondering whether the terrible words of the dying man were true or false.

Hurriedly she stooped over the dead body, and took from his breast, with an audible sigh of relief, a memorandum-book and a golden ring. Concealing these in her dress, she moved close to Wilton.

"You did well to slay that man," she exclaimed. "Twice has he heaped wrongs upon your head that only blood could wash out. He robbed you of your wife. He robbed you of your Child of the Desert."

The knowledge of his misfortunes this strange woman possessed filled Henry with astonishment.

"Me you know not," she continued, perceiving his perplexity; "but I am mother to one you dearly loved once, till that bad man severed you two by his false wiles, and plunged you both into misery. I am the mother of Azzahra, the unhappy Ayesha."

"Is it then true that she still lives, as that dead man asserted with his last breath?" gasped Henry in breathless eagerness.

"She lives," Ayesha sadly answered. "The letter she wrote was extracted by threats, and under false pretences. When you struck the fatal blow and raised that purple welt," she added, pointing to the forehead of the corpse, "Azzahra stood beside you in the throng."

Azzahra alive, and so near! yet he knew it not!

"What avails life to her," continued Ayesha, "when she has lost you, and you are wedded to another, to whom you will blindly cling in spite of her foul transgressions?" And she cast on him a searching look, to try and discover his intentions.

Henry was tender and pitying. He had stricken down his wife's lover, and that through mistaken clemency he deemed punishment sufficient. To Ayesha he protested in genuine earnestness that, much though appearances condemned Olinda, he would not condemn her. He could not bring himself to believe she had

actually transgressed and put herself on a level with vile scum, for he held her to be too pure and virtuous to commit such heinous sin.

At his simple credulity Ayesha gave a sorrowful smile.

"But for your unexpected and unwelcome return, to-morrow would have seen them far hence," she replied. "All was arranged for their flight. You know not, moreover," Ayesha continued, "that often your wife visited that man at his private house, where they were wont to pass hours together."

"But that does not prove guilt," he quickly interposed.

"Does not prove guilt?" she scornfully repeated. "What does prove guilt then? My outraged husband, Selim Mustapha, spake and thought thus, and Azzahra is a living proof of his contemptible pusillanimous perversity. No child of his is Azzahra. She is child to that man's father," she continued, pointing to the dead man. "Do you really believe in your heart," she resumed, "that ardent lovers would remain all day locked up together in private, and part innocent? Do you believe that your wife went to that man's dwelling with no evil intentions? Is it likely? Is it human nature?"

"He certainly did boast, when at the point of death," Wilton replied, as he pointed to St. Bertrand's remains, his faith already wavering

before her energetic denunciations, "that he had triumphed over her."

"And he did triumph," she went on. "Reputations are not compromised, risks of detection and exposure are not incurred, without enjoying the sweet reward. The unreasoning intoxicating delights of passion must perforce assert their powerful irresistible sway."

Abashed and confounded, he answered not.

She saw he was converted by her arguments, and she followed up the advantage.

"Seek not to recommence life with this woman," she urged. "She will hate and loathe you for murdering her lover. She will long to see you dead also. Fly from her. Fly from such degradation."

"Woe is me!" he sighed. "What is to become of me? Azzahra lost to me for ever, and now Olinda lost too!"

"Azzahra is not lost to you," interposed Ayesha. "She loves you as ever. She blames you not for your marriage; she only blames herself and her wicked brother, who lies there dead."

"Azzahra not lost to me? What mean you?" he asked eagerly. "You forget the impassable gulf between. You forget she can never be my bride."

"The Mahometans regard not these matters as do the Europeans," answered Ayesha. "So

long as a woman remains loyal and faithful, she is honoured and respected."

"But remember how Azzahra has been brought up, with virtuous and exalted ideas," he urged.

"I do remember," she replied, "and that is why I prefer her to be with a Christian rather than with one of our illiterate, unpolished race. Where two hearts beat as one, why drag them apart? Those who truly love ought to give up all for each other. Azzahra, I undertake to promise, will be ready to give up all for you, if you will give up all for her. What would prevent a Mahometan marriage by the Kadi? She would be bound to you, and she would rely on your honour to be bound to her."

This was sore temptation. Happiness, love, all he could desire within his grasp! Must he sacrifice such bliss? Must he dash from his lips such a cup of nectared joys? Must he make of himself a martyr, for the sake of what the rotten, paltry, contemptible world would say? Must he chain himself for life to one he could never regard again but with aversion and contempt? Must he make of himself an object of ridicule, a byword, and a reproach to all his kinsfolk and acquaintance?

He shuddered at the thought. He shrank from the ordeal. Which life, he reasoned, would be the holy one? Which would be the sinful one?

But the plunge into a fresh existence appalled him : for it makes the bravest man tremble to turn his back on the past, on home, and on all he once held dear.

He asked Ayesha to meet him again at an appointed time, when he would tell his decision after consulting with his friends.

"You may spare the trouble," she replied, sorrowing. "They will advise to forgive, and to struggle on in unrighteous hypocrisy—in hatred and malice and all uncharitableness."

Too truly she prophesied. Edwardes and Johnson urged that he should trample on and discard the true loving heart, and take back the faithless betrayer of his honour. They argued that where no visible proof, no ocular demonstration of guiltiness exists, man is bound in honour to stifle his well-founded convictions, and to give weak woman the benefit of the doubt—or, in fact, the benefit of no doubt.

Their earnest solicitations prevailed, and sadly he returned to Ayesha, to convey the intelligence that was to seal Azzahra's misery and his own.

At a short distance from where he met Ayesha, a veiled figure stood, earnestly watching what passed. It was the poor spurned, deserted Azzahra. When she beheld him move away she almost bounded forward to fling herself at his feet and crave compassion. But her heart failed :

she trembled to follow the teachings of her mother, and he was gone.

Truly the spirits prophesied, she sighed. The fair woman had crossed her path and had triumphed. Would the prophecy come true that she herself likewise would triumph at the last? Alas! she dared not now indulge the hope.

Horried at the thought of having taken a fellow-creature's life, oppressed with a sense of degradation at his disgrace through his wife's infidelity, and sorrowing for his lost Azzahra, Henry sought his wife's presence.

He found her seated at the piano, singing one of her pretty ballads, which she finished as soon as she had warmly welcomed him back.

THE SWEETS OF LOVE.

I.

'Tis sweet to stray together
In childhood's happy hour,
When all is bright and smiling,
And when no cloud can lower.
With loving hearts together
To stray o'er hill and dell;
To pluck the purple heather,
The may, and the bluebell.

II.

'Tis sweet to live together
In pure and holy love;
To share the warming sunshine
Of blessings from above.
'Tis sweet to hear loved voices
Pour forth their gladsome sound,
To see the smile of fondness
Enliven all around.

III.

'Tis sweet to die together,
When youth and hope are past,
And when the drooping spirit
Sinks down to rest at last ;
To pass away together,
The weary journey o'er,
Where joy shall reign for ever
Upon the heavenly shore.

As Olinda sang the words "'Tis sweet to live together in pure and holy love," she looked up at her husband and gave him a fond smile.

"Do you find it 'sweet to live together' with me 'in pure and holy love'?" he asked, when she had finished.

"Of course I do," she answered, colouring. "How silly you are to ask such a question!"

"And you would deem it 'sweet to die together' with me likewise?" he continued in a careless tone. "You would not wish to go and die with another—starting away, for instance, to-morrow?"

Then Olinda sprang up, defiantly. "I understand you not," she exclaimed, pale with anger. "What mean you by these taunts?"

"My friend, Mr. Edwardes, will tell you what I mean," he answered in calm composure, as he went out from her presence.

To Edwardes he entrusted the painful task of breaking to Olinda that her lover had been slain by the hand of her husband.

When she heard that St. Bertrand was dead,

and that Wilton had killed him, she uttered a piercing, wailing shriek of bitter despair, and flinging open the door between, she stood before her husband. In a voice choking with excitement, grief, and fury, she loudly demanded how he had dared to slay this man? wherefore had he been slain?

“To save you,” he sorrowfully answered.

CHAPTER XXII.

TOO LATE.

AFTER the sweeping tempest of sorrow for the dead and of resentment against the living had abated, the kind, gentle, soothing, forgiving compassion lavished on Olinda by Henry began to bring forth fruit. She began to review her conduct with shame, and to be deeply humbled before her wronged husband for her grievous misdoings. She blessed him for sparing, for forbearing, for taking her back to his bosom; she blessed him for saving her—saving her from herself, and saving her from one she now understood would have plunged her into a life of despised infamy; she blessed him for stretching out the hand of mercy and lifting her out of the depths.

His noble chivalry she revered and honoured. In return she strove hard to chase his cares away, to win back his love and to give him hers again.

Her ardent, unceasing efforts to redeem the

past softened Wilton's heart, and drew her towards him once more. With generous magnanimity he made allowance for her wretched, misguided weakness in succumbing to the wiles of the flatterer, and pitied this bruised reed in her penitent humility. One severing barrier thus disappeared from between them in the oblivion of days and deeds gone by. Could the severing barrier of departed affection be hurled down likewise? and could the smiling gardens of restored peace and confidence and love be made to blossom in its place?

Bravely they both laboured to accomplish the herculean task.

He gladdened the ear of his wife by confessing how he reproached himself for having repelled her and driven her into temptation by neglect, and by mournings that must have rankled in her breast and driven her to jealous desperation.

She gladdened the heart of her husband by telling with what confusion and abhorrence she regarded her conduct, and with gratitude she adored him for rescuing her from perdition.

The contrition of the weeping penitent he fondly regarded as a sight at which angels would rejoice. She thought how blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!

A new era seemed to have commenced, the unfolding of new scenes of united happiness, the

dawning of a new day, the inauguration of a renewed existence.

Yet was all a hollow, baseless delusion, a shadowy dream. Regretful memories of the past would still persist in surging up and obtaining the mastery, defying the well-intentioned attempts to crush them and trample them under foot.

Thus the two deceived themselves, and deceived each other. They were breathing a tainted atmosphere of falsehood and hypocrisy, though they knew it not. They believed in their future, and they lived in hope.

Soon, alas! would disenchantment come; soon would the truth burst open to view; soon would the vision of bliss fade and vanish away.

How short-sighted are poor benighted mortals! How blind that they cannot see the life-destroying sword above, destined in its fall to pierce them to the heart.

Henry was blind. Fostering, tender sympathy, he trusted with implicit faith, would cheer Olinda's drooping spirit, and chase sorrow from her heart. Ceaseless devotion to her was therefore his daily task. All his thoughts, all his care, all his energies were employed in finding occupation for her mind, in making her existence peaceful and contented, in bringing back the smile to her wan face.

He felt that he was acting a god-like part,

and hoped to find his reward in years of unmingled felicity.

While thus in hopeful search after the unattainable, they journeyed to visit the picturesque land of the Kabyle, far away among the wild regions of the Atlas. They went to see the bold, stupendous, snowy precipices of the Djurjura; the swelling hills below covered with orchards, fig-groves, and olive yards; the rich fields of waving corn; the innumerable eyry-like towns and villages, natural fortresses that crowned every height; the vast forests of cedars, thuyas, and junipers; the cork woods; the troops of monkeys that clambered among the cliffs overhead and chattered in rage at the intruder into their dreary solitude; and the wondrous panoramic view from the Col of Tagrouda of valleys, mountainous heights, forests, towns, and smiling plains that stretched away far, far beneath.

Olinda's enjoyment was unbounded in admiring and sketching such lovely and such varied scenes, and in listening to the genial converse of her husband as he sat beside her watching her skilful handiwork.

Seated amid the wild rocks under a huge, canopied cedar tree, which three men could scarce encircle with outstretched arms, she was absorbed in painting the gorgeous prospect around, when the mellow plaintive voice of a

woman echoed through the heights above that made her start, and turn deadly pale.

Breathless and motionless she hearkened to the words of the melody the singer was sadly pouring forth.

AZZAHRA'S LAMENT.

I.

Far have I wandered on the desert plain,
Among the children of the brave and free,
And seen the bright array of gallant hosts,
In number as the sand along the sea.
Those days of chivalry have faded by;
Deserted, sad, forlorn, in shame I lie.
Lost are the blessings of a father's love;
Lost are the smiles of Allah from on high.
The hours of care and sorrow I have passed
No eye hath seen, no words can tell.
Oh! give me back the sweet repose of home!
Those happy, happy days I ever loved so well!

II.

My joy to hear the clarion's wild alarms,
To see the flashing swords in triumph shine,
To see the warrior hosts rush forth to arms,
To hear the crash along the battle line.
How I have loved o'er mountain, plain, and vale,
Joyous, unfettered, in my pride to roam!
Yet oft my tearful eyes would mourn the past;
My heart would languish for the peace of home.
The hours, &c.

III.

The treasured days of bliss and maddening love,
So sweet in passing, but so swiftly passed,
Will ever fondly in my memory dwell—
Dear hours of cherished longings crushed at last.

Ah ! woe is me ! my happy dreams are fled ;
In widowed solitude I weep and mourn.
Borne down by silent grief my heart is dead,
Dwelling on joys that never can return.
The hours, &c.

When the voice ceased, Olinda convulsively grasped the arm of her husband, turning on him a look of terror and dismay.

“Heard you that voice ?” she gasped, with blanched cheeks, and trembling in excited emotion. “It was the voice of Azzahra.”

With heaving breast and distended eye she awaited a reply, but none came. Henry’s heart was too full to lie and act the hypocrite. He remained stricken down, bewildered, and with looks cast upon the ground.

“Merciful Heaven ! All this time, then, you have been deceiving me and mocking me,” she frantically exclaimed, bursting into a wild paroxysm of weeping. “Azzahra lives, and you know it.”

While she spake, Azzahra moved down and stood before them on a rock that projected over the darkling chasm yawning below ; but her face was turned away, so that she saw them not.

Involuntarily Wilton’s eyes turned to look once more on the adored being he had never ceased to love, and a smile of fond remembrance lighted up his gladdened face, when a heavy fall beside him on the ground awoke him from his

reverie. Horror-stricken, he beheld his unhappy wife writhing in agony at his feet.

"Farewell, dear husband!" she hysterically sobbed. "Nobly have you done your duty, and fought the good fight for my sake—how nobly never till now have I realised. But well I knew that your love I possessed not, and now I know the reason why. Azzahra lives, and that love can never be mine. Vain is the attempt to gain it. In despair I relinquish the attempt."

"Go to her," she slowly and feebly gasped, as the breath of life fast ebbed away. "Go to her. She will make you happy. But sometimes shed a tear of pity for your guilty, polluted Olinda."

She then sank back exhausted; and, after a few convulsive struggles of untold agony, all was still.

With a loud exclamation of alarm and horror, he lifted in his arms the motionless form, and anxiously looked into the pale rigid face.

A phial fell from her hand—empty. It told all. She was dead.

Deeply shocked at the appalling scene, and overcome with compassionate sorrow for one destined, but for perversity and folly, to be so honoured and so happy, he departed for aid to bear away the sad burden.

To Azzahra he dared not and would not go;

the dead form at his feet forbade. With his unfortunate wife not yet cold and life but just departed, he deemed rightly that it would seem like sacrilege—an outrage upon every feeling of honour and propriety, to lavish affectionate endearments on her rival.

His cry of terror had reached Azzahra. Turning round she witnessed the tragic scene. She saw Olinda's dying agonies; she saw Wilton depart; she saw the lifeless figure stretched on the ground.

Shedding heart-felt tears of pity and sorrow, she sadly moved down to take a last fond farewell of her departed friend, and to imprint a last kiss on her pallid cheek.

Then she was gone. She honoured Wilton for the respect he had shown to the dead by curbing the impetuous impulse he must have felt to rush to her arms now that he was free again, and she conscientiously, though sorrowfully, determined to abstain from seeking to break in upon the solitude and the grief of the mourner.

But when time had passed they met.

They met; and, after sorrowfully bewailing Olinda's sad end, they renewed their impassioned vows of love, and dwelt on the happy future they blindly believed was in store.

With tender and chivalrous self-denial, however, Wilton shrank from dishonouring the

memory of his ill-fated wife by another marriage before the days of mourning were ended.

To Ayesha this resolve caused grave and constant alarm, dreading the vindictive fury of Selim Mustapha, whose release from imprisonment was nigh at hand. For, through the exertions made at her entreaty by the brothers-in-arms of her former paramour, Raoul's father, she had obtained a promise that Selim Mustapha should shortly recover his liberty, though on condition of leaving his native land; and her earnest desire was that, before he could come to wreak vengeance on the Christian lover of his daughter, Wilton and Azzahra should be safe out of his reach, far away from the African shores.

But Henry ever persisted in refusing to hearken to the voice of her warnings. Day after day he passed with his intended bride, happy in her love and her radiant smiles; but his bride he would not make her until the appointed hour had sounded. From the path of duty he would not swerve, not even to realise his visions of blissful contentment, not even to reach the goal that was so close at hand, not even to seize the prize within his grasp, not even to ward off the blood-stained hand of revenge lifted up against him.

On the wooded heights of the Sahel the lovers sat, fondly conversing about the bright future and the sad past.

At last Azzahra dwelt secure in peaceful contentment, feeling all her troubles had come to an end. Her mother, wiser in her generation than herself, had prudently destroyed the ring and the pocket-book of the murdered Jacquard, the only proofs of guilty knowledge that could rise up in judgment against her ; her path would never more be crossed by the poor lifeless fair woman ; she was going far from the blood-dyed father, whose presence she loathed for his crimes, now that the wild excitement of Desert life aroused no more her romantic admiration for his chivalrous heroism ; she had won back her adored lover ; and she was to live united with him in joys for evermore.

Azzahra was indignantly repudiating St. Bertrand's charge against her of murder, when a small grey puff of smoke rose from the cippice in front, the buzzing hum of a bullet speeding on its way came through the air, and Azzahra fell a lifeless corpse on the breast of her lover.

Her guilty father, Selim Mustapha, it was who fired the fatal shot, intending to slay the Giaour, for daring to rob him of his child's affections. At the moment his finger pressed the trigger, his unhappy daughter chanced to move forward her head into the line of fire, and thus received upon her temple the deadly missive.

The blood-thirsty assassin would not be balked of his prey. To him the sight of his

favourite offspring lying dead, slain by his hand, brought no pangs of compunction, no tears of pity, no return of parental love. His black, morose spirit brooded only on what he deemed the baseness, the treachery, the perfidy, and the ingratitude of his best-loved child. Again he fired, and again the messenger of death sped on its murderous course. Wilton sank down mortally wounded, with his loved Azzahra in his arms.

But the hand of the avenger was near. Before Selim Mustapha could rise after his deeds of blood, Kredoudja sprang upon him with the swiftness and fury of a tigress. Dragging his long knife from his girdle, she plunged it into his foul heart, and laid him a corpse at her feet.

As Wilton's gentle spirit fled, he gathered strength to fondly press to his bosom once again the lifeless form and to kiss the dear lips he had loved so well.

"Adieu to hope and love!" he sighed, as the life-blood oozed away, and the tears coursed down his cheeks. "Adieu to all I prize on earth! Adieu to my dear Child of the Desert."

THE END.





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